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ON THE COVER: Cornwall, England, by Adam Burton/Getty Images

KATHRYN COOK (BUILDING); DAVID MCLEAN/AURORA PHOTOS (FOOD); NICK PIRONI (BOY)



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British boys
in Trafalgar
Square.



[EDITOR'S NOTE]

Rooting for Travel

SOMEWHERE IN A SHOE BOX is a picture of me at 11 years old in London's Trafalgar Square, enveloped in a cloud of pigeons. I'm with my mother on my first trip to the "home countries," which for her were England and Scotland (she was born a McPherson). We stayed with my grandparents, who regaled me with stories of the Blitz (Granddad in a taxi strafed by a Messerschmitt, Grandmother finally having decided to sleep in the root cellar on the very night their house took a direct hit from a German V-2 buzz bomb). From there we traveled to Matlock in the heart of then industrial Derbyshire, where I spent a week making deliveries in a lorry for my uncle's textile factory (I recall lots of tepid, sugary English tea). Finally, we went to Morayshire, in the north of Scotland (where Shakespeare set *Macbeth*), to visit an outlandishly huge assortment of relatives (I tried my first sip of Scotch, my first taste of haggis).

That trip and many subsequent ones offered a moving glimpse into the lives of my elders and the roots of my family. Rummaging around in the land of our beginnings is now a powerful trend in travel. I did it younger than many, but no matter how old you are, the act forces you to examine yourself in light of where you came from. In "Going Home" on page 80, we showcase five writers who took a step back into the past—in Northern Ireland, Taiwan, Sicily, Poland, and Angola—to explore their heritage firsthand, for the first time. We hope it inspires you to do the same. And for those keen to dig even deeper into their family tree, National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence Spencer Wells's Genographic Project recently launched a new kit, the Geno 2.0, which allows anyone to submit a cheek-swab DNA sample for a personalized analysis of genetic origin, including ancestral migration paths.

—KEITH BELLOWES

[FOREIGN DESK]

INSIDER'S AMSTERDAM

Throughout 2013, Amsterdam celebrates a host of cultural milestones. We asked our colleague Paul Römer, the managing editor of the Netherlands edition of *National Geographic Traveler*, for his local take.

ALL ABOARD

The picturesque canals—built 400 years ago—are best explored aboard a Museumboot. Stop in the nearby city of Haarlem for the century-old Frans Hals Museum, a gem that rivals the more famous Rijksmuseum and Van Gogh Museum—both of which, by the way, are reopening this spring after extensive renovations.

IN BLOOM

For a tulip fix [below], follow the crowds of locals and tourists to "Amsterdam's backyard"—the huge, exuberant park called Keukenhof (open late March through May) in nearby Lisse. Tours depart Amsterdam daily, and you'll see plenty of flower fields along the way, too.



MOVING PICTURES

The EYE Film Institute Netherlands, a Dutch center for film on the waterfront (locally called the IJ), is an architectural stunner that should be visited the Amsterdam way: Rent a bike at Centraal Station, take the ferry, and, after enjoying an indie film, continue to the lovable town of Durgardam.

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The Westergasfabriek, an old industrial area, is a cool place to hang out. Find cafés, an alternative movie theater, art shops, and lively bars inside renovated warehouses.

NORWAY
POWERED BY NATURE

TRAFFIC IN NORWEGIAN

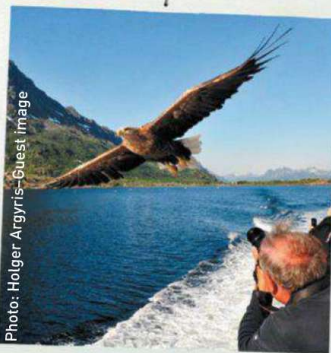


Photo: Holger Argyris-Guest image

Pristine nature & wildlife

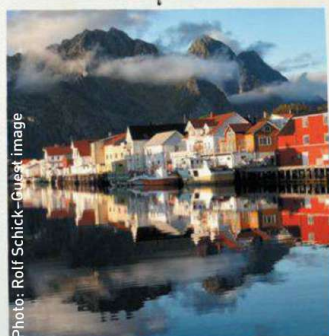


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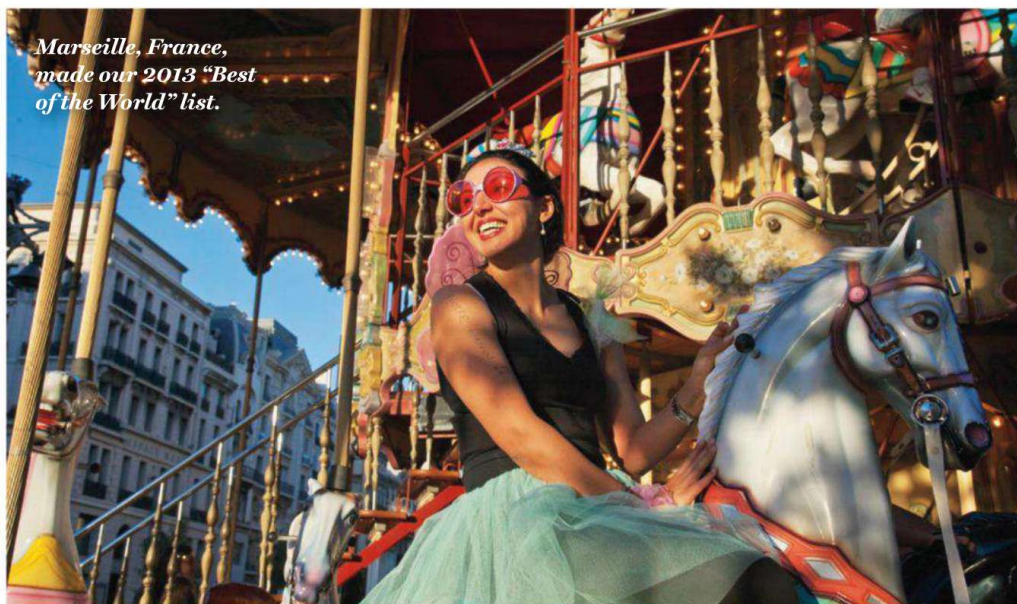
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PLAN AND BOOK 
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Marseille, France,
made our 2013 "Best
of the World" list.



Best in Show

TRUE TO FORM, our annual "Best of the World" selections (December 2012/January 2013), which ranged from Bagan, Myanmar, to Thessaloniki, Greece, got people talking. "I'm so proud to see Ecuador's beautiful capital, Quito, where I was born, in your magazine," wrote Sadira Delgado Laiben, now of **Arlington, Texas**. The *Daily Freeman*, a **Kingston, N.Y.**, newspaper, applauded our inclusion of the Hudson Valley—aka the "girl next door" who is often overlooked, as the paper's editors described its region: "We do love this well-considered shout-out from *National Geographic Traveler*, including the hip prose positing that 'not even Rip Van Winkle could sleep through the cultural clarion of today's Hudson

Valley.' ('No wonder we keep waking up at 3:30 a.m., Ma. It's not the train, it's the damn cultural clarion, again.')

Other feedback took a more serious tack. "I was disappointed in your selections of Uganda and Grenada," wrote Lawrence Denger of **Woodland Hills, Calif.** "In both countries there were documented cases of harassment and attacks on gay travelers in 2012. In the case of East Africa, there are better choices like Tanzania and Kenya, which I have found less

hostile; for the Caribbean, try Barbados or the ABC islands (Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao)."

From the editors: Our mission as a travel magazine is to showcase the world and its beauty. We also believe travel can be an effective way to expose problems, facilitate cultural exchange and conversation, and encourage change.

YOU'VE GOT SPIRIT

Christopher Elliott's criticism of Spirit Airlines (The Insider, December 2012/January 2013) attracted kudos. "Thank

you for having the intestinal fortitude to say what you did," wrote Peter Volny of **Fountain Hills, Ariz.** "Sadly, Spirit is not alone. Seemingly, the airline industry has achieved its unstated objective to be the customer-unfriendliest of all."

MI CASA, SU CASA A feature about Casablanca, Morocco, ("You Must Remember This," December 2012/January 2013) recalled warm memories for Wayne Diehl of **Spartanburg, S.C.**

"My wife (then a nurse) and I (a pilot) met while stationed at the Air Force base—now Mohammed V International Airport—near Casa from 1958 to 1959. We were married by the pasha of Berrechid (a suburb) and lived in a French-designed apartment building on Boulevard Hassan II. We bought the material for my wife's wedding gown in a chic French shop in Casa. We returned to the city on our 35th anniversary and found our old building. The ice cream shop, Oliver's, was still on the ground floor. Casa remains a special place for us, from the food to the medina and the shops."

[READER'S CHOICE]

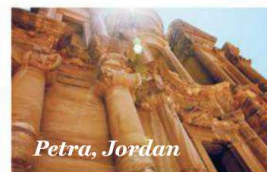
THE YEAR IN WANDERLUST

Where in the world would you most love to travel in 2013? We asked that question across our community—in print, on our Intelligent Travel blog, and via Twitter and Facebook. Your responses got us reaching for our passports:

“

"I'm starting now to plan for the World Cup in Brazil. I'll attend some games in Recife and Natal and from those cities visit Fernando de Noronha, an archipelago off the coast."

ANA MARIA CABALLERO
McGUIRE | NEEDHAM, MASS.



"As a child I called Indiana Jones my hero, and more than anything I want to see Petra, Jordan."

BRANDI BENNETT
BENTONVILLE, ARK.

"Madagascar is high on my list—for the chocolate."

DOREEN PENDGRACS
MATLOCK, MANITOBA

"I've always wanted to go to Tusheti National Park in the Caucasus Mountains in Georgia—what a dramatic landscape."

DANIELLE MEGYERI
CAMPBELL, CALIF.

"This year I'm planning trips closer to home—South Dakota and the Outer Banks in North Carolina. There are so many beautiful things to see in America."

LISA SMITH
MIDLAND, MICH.

”

NEXT QUESTION: *Where have you traveled to explore family roots? E-mail stories and photos to travel_talk@ngs.org.*

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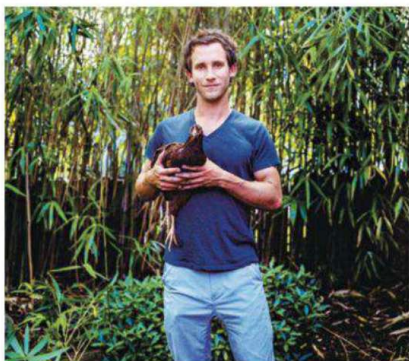
SMART

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THE TASTE

Something to Squawk About

GONE ARE THE DAYS of farmers carting tobacco leaves to auction in downtown Durham, North Carolina. In their place, city dwellers tend to backyard chicken coops in Raleigh and deliver foraged figs, persimmons, and pawpaws to be infused into craft beer at Durham's Fullsteam Brewery. "People come in with buckets or bags full of fruit," says Fullsteam founder Sean Wilson, who has earned a James Beard nod as well as advanced degrees from Duke University. He's part of the **Research Triangle's new crop**—highly educated farmers, chefs, and small-business owners—to sprout as much of the area's tobacco industry goes up in smoke. Chapel Hill's Top of the Hill Distillery makes whiskey using organic grain from nearby fields, while Raleigh City Farm grows veggies next to locavore Market Restaurant. ¶ Spring brings out curious neighbors. On the 40-stop Piedmont Farm Tour, visitors admire goats and "egg-mobiles" (coops on wheels); during Tour D'Coop, red-wattled Dominique hens preen for the public behind historic Raleigh bungalows. —DIANE DANIEL



Roost masters: Raleigh's annual Tour D'Coop spotlights the local trend of keeping backyard chicken coops.





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THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Rome's Full Monti

TWO MILLENNIA AGO, gladiators, prostitutes, and politicians—Julius Caesar, for one—rubbed shoulders in **Monti, Rome**, a red-light district adjacent to the Forum and Colosseum. Today Monti is again red hot. In this zone where something new is always opening, Italians gather for animated conversations outside overflowing wine bars, and young women in stilettos pick their way through cobblestoned streets. Even so, white-haired *nonnas* still shop for *brutti ma buoni* cookies at the local bakeries, passersby still greet one another by name, and only one big-name American retailer has sneaked in. “Monti has changed into a VIP zone,” says Giovanna Dughera, owner of a Monti art boutique. “But it still has a spirit of past times.”

1 Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore

Sparkling from its gold-coffered ceiling to its fifth-century mosaics, this lavish papal church claims the world's oldest crèche, sculpted by Arnolfo di Cambio in the 1200s to display wood slabs said to be from Christ's crib.

2 Studio Silice Young glassmaker Anna

Preziosi's play with texture and color makes for a style as eye-catching as it is contemporary—platters overlaid with rose-gold petals, bowls piled with gold-leafed glass straws à la an opulent bird's nest.

3 Gelateria Fatamorgana This newcomer to Monti scoops all-natural gelato in a small

white-walled storefront with the ascetic look of a lab. Sample creative combinations (pear with Gorgonzola, black rice with rosebuds) at the counter, then take your treat to the piazza just outside.

4 Le Talpe Adding pizzazz to Monti's blossoming boutique scene, owner Giovanna Dughera excels in chic eclecticism, proving



medical tubing can make surprisingly elegant necklaces and a fuzzy faux ermine can be worn as a stole.

5 Piazza della Madonna dei Monti All kinds squeeze onto the 16th-century fountain steps of this “piazzetta” (as residents endearingly call it). For a more comfortable seat, grab an alfresco table at the bustling La Bottega del Caffè.

6 San Pietro in Vincoli This fifth-century church houses the tomb Michelangelo



designed for Pope Julius II as well as his famed Moses statue. Michelangelo designed the beard-twirling icon to be one of more than 40 towering statues, but money woes and a change of pope forced him to scrap his plans. The abandonment always haunted him.

7 Trajan's Markets Scholars say this soaring complex dates to the second century and once held ancient offices. Today it contains the Museum of the Imperial Forums, which lays out how this space built up by Rome's power players looked in its heyday.

8 Enoteca Provincia Romana This wine bar serves only local food and drink, including top-notch vino (try the crisp, golden Frascati), artisanal beer, and updated classics such as spaghetti carbonara topped with bright zucchini flowers.

—Amanda Ruggeri





Monti's Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore offers quiet sanctuary, while life hums around the Renaissance fountain of Piazza della Madonna dei Monti (above).

THE TREND

Lights Out

Everything is illuminated? Not in the City of Light. As part of a European effort to improve energy efficiency, Paris has **banned overnight lighting** of monuments, churches, statues, bridges, and fountains. At 1 a.m. the Eiffel Tower flickers dark. Managing urban light has become a conservation goal. Barcelona uses “intelligent” LED streetlights equipped with timers and motion detectors to cut energy costs. And the Audubon Society sponsors voluntary “Lights Out” nights in New York, Boston, and other cities to make North American flyways safer for migrating birds. —George W. Stone



THE IDEA

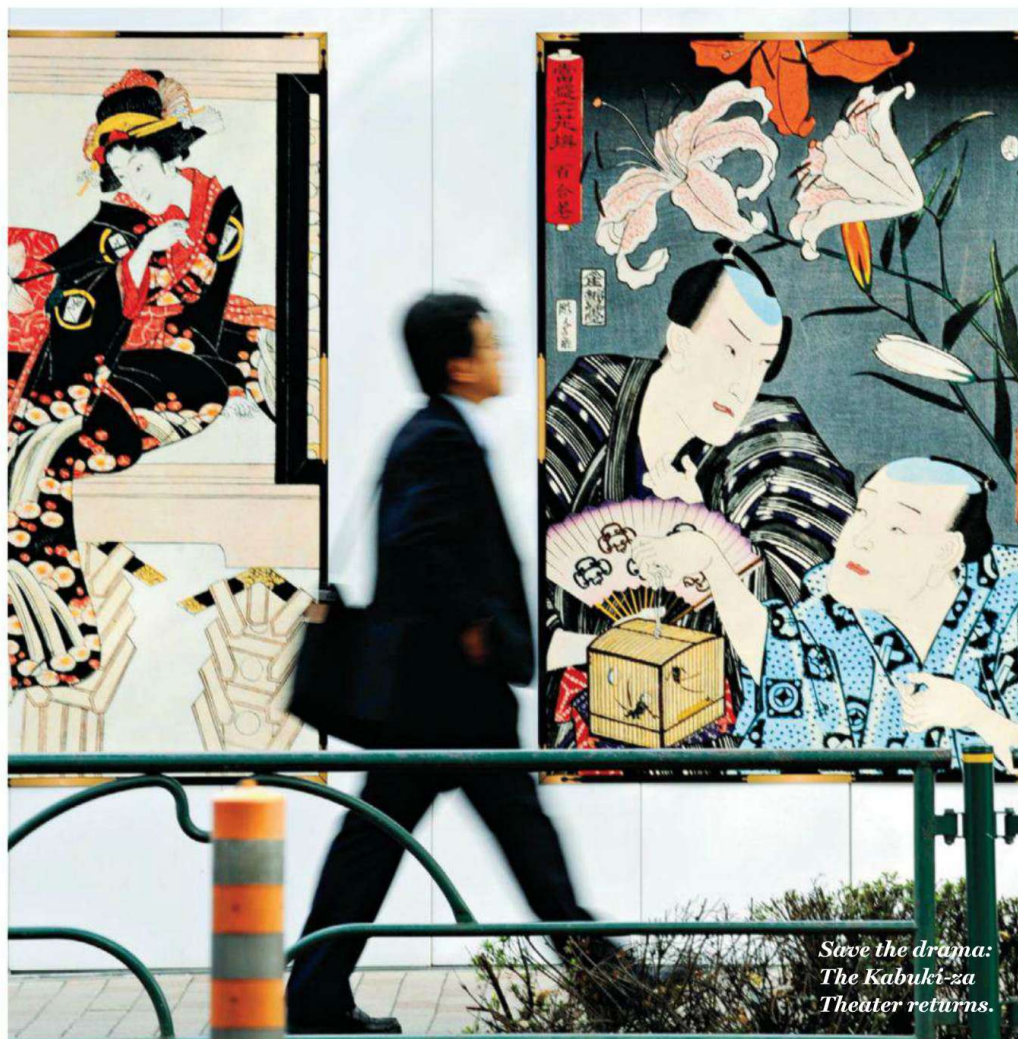
Wild Rides

Fun is the new frontier for commuters. The Overvecht rail station in Utrecht, Netherlands, sports a “transfer accelerator” (a slide) that scoots time-strapped travelers to the train tracks. In Singapore, Changi Airport’s four-story helix slide (above) brings an amusement spark to your layover. And Shanghai’s Bund Sightseeing Tunnel, a subway line that runs under the Huangpu River, is like traveling to Oz. Its clear capsule zips through a loopy kaleidoscopic light show set to a campy sound track. —G.W.S.

THE OPENING

From the Ashes

THE MARQUEE LOGO of **Tokyo’s Kabuki-za Theater**—a phoenix taking flight amid swirling flames—is a fitting symbol for the famed company, which rises again, in its fifth building since 1898, in April. Like the dynamic plays and dances it presents, the Ginza District venue is no stranger to drama. Over the years, the Kabuki-za has been consumed by fire, earthquakes, and war; its rebirth sets the stage for epic programs of song and dance, colorful kimonos, traditional *kumadori* makeup, and the art of *onnagata*: male actors playing the female parts. Kengo Kuma, lead architect on the project, incorporated details and artifacts from the previous buildings into a new structure designed to withstand tremors. “With Kabuki, the sense of the theater being crowded with people is important, so the seating will still be a little cramped,” Kuma told the *Japan Times*. Such intimacy is an essential element of Kabuki’s “land of poetic vision,” as Shutaro Miyake wrote in *Kabuki Drama*. “One might as well climb a tree in quest of fish as to expect logic and rationality in a Kabuki play.” After its dramatic pause, Tokyo’s Kabuki-za is once again ready, as its phoenix portends, for liftoff. —JENNIFER POCOCK



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The Kabuki-za
Theater returns.



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Read about the spontaneous adventures of Andrew Evans, *National Geographic Traveler* contributing editor and Digital Nomad, as he takes on Texas. He's blogging from barbecues, posting from Austin's hot music scene, uploading photos from a working dude ranch, live tweeting his climb to the highest peak in Texas, and sharing the wildlife, stars, and amazing landscapes of America's second biggest state. From bright lights to back roads, he's discovering the true, untamed spirit of this one-of-a-kind place. Follow him online and get inspired to fire up a Texas adventure of your own.

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THE PLACE

Blue Danube

BEYOND THE POLITE boating party often pegged to central Europe's Danube River (think Strauss waltzes and sips of brandy) lies an Amazon-like wilderness, a labyrinth of oxbow lakes, secret sandbars, and flooded willow forests at the intersection of Croatia, Hungary, and Serbia where the Mura and the Drava join and then meet the Danube.

Last July UNESCO pronounced this riverscape a biosphere reserve—a boon for its rare indigenous species and for adventure lovers, too. In this area still healing from the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, ecotourism is rising from the abyss. A hike, bike ride, or—best of all—canoe paddle through the sprawling floodplain of **Kopački Rit Nature Park**, part of the reserve near the eastern Croatian city of Osijek (“ebb tide”), reveals a dazzling diversity that includes 293 bird species.

Reeds and ryegrass flourish among water lilies; purple herons and white-tailed eagles soar overhead; and, in spring, the tips of poplars poke out of the high waters. “After a serene glide through the maze of waterways,” says Jasmin Sadiković of Zlatna Greda, an eco-outfitter that leads day trips through the park, “wrap it up at a nearby tavern over *fiš paprikaš*, a spicy fish stew.” —*Anja Mutić*



All kinds
pop up at the
Good People
taproom.

THE COMEBACK

Toward the Promised Land

IN THE 1960s, **Birmingham, Alabama**'s Redmont Hotel hosted politicians tout-ing “segregation forever.” These days, young urbanites mingle over martinis at that hotel's rooftop bar, called Above. Things are looking up all across the city, which in April marks 50 years since Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote his landmark “Letter From a Birmingham Jail.” Local printmaker Kevin Cleveland, whose father marched with King, embodies his hometown's revival. “Birmingham is coming alive—it's flexing its muscles,” he says. Streets that once reeled with riots now embrace community, from contemporary Art Folk Gallery to Second Avenue hot spots like El Barrio with its graffiti-style mural and tequila-spiked cheese dip. And a cross section of the city's residents convene for sunset yoga classes, drum circles, and film screenings at Railroad Park, Birmingham's open-air “living room.” Featuring a natural amphitheater and a pavilion (right), the green space trumped New York's renowned High Line park for a design award and is propelling downtown's renaissance, from the new Regions Field ballpark to the buzzing taproom of Good People Brewing Company. —*KELSEY SNELL*



WOLFGANG HOLZHAUER (BIRD), JASON WALLIS (BAR, PAVILION)



CITY OF CULTURES

DURBAN
THE WARMEST PLACE TO BE

Locals call Durban eThekweni—Zulu for “where the earth and the ocean meet.” It’s a fitting name for a city famed for golden beaches, year-round sunshine, and upbeat ethnic diversity. Zulus, Indians, and Europeans bring the influences of Africa, the East, and the West into a harmonious cultural diversity that pervades Durban’s art, music, food, fashion, and friendly atmosphere.

Nowhere is this cultural mix more tangible than in the vibrant community lifestyle of townships such as Umlazi. Walking its bustling streets and markets or enjoying its lively bars and traditional braais, it’s easy to become immersed in this exciting urban African culture. And a delicious reminder of Durban’s strong Indian and European influences is ever present in the form of Bunny Chow. This hearty hollowed-out half-loaf, filled with curried meats is a great Durban tradition that seems to reflect the harmonization of East and West in Africa.

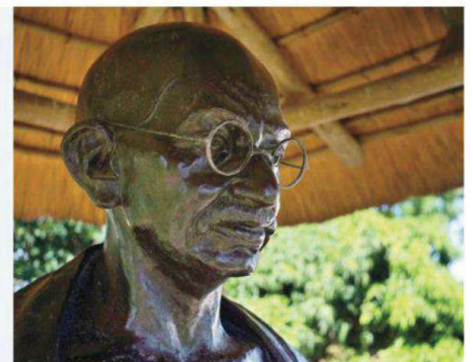
Perhaps it’s this powerful harmony in Durban’s ethnic diversity that has placed it at the heart of South Africa’s liberation history. The sprawling Durban township of Freedom Valley is well named: It’s where ANC founder John Dube was born, where Nelson Mandela cast the first democratic vote, and where Gandhi developed the philosophy of passive resistance. It’s a proud political legacy for a proudly multicultural people.

And that multicultural mix makes flamboyant festivals a regular feature of Durban life. In September, the Durban Halala EtheKwini festival sweeps the city with a colorful celebration of its ethnic diversity. Music, dance, arts, sports, heritage, and food take to the streets, emphasizing the sense of social cohesion and civic pride that unites Durban’s multicultural society. It’s this harmonious diversity that makes Durban such a fascinating and friendly city—and one that is so rewarding to visit.

Find out more about Durban’s rich multicultural heritage by visiting www.durbanexperience.co.za

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Ricksha Rides: A ride in one of these carriages through the magnificent Durban beachfront is a true delight; Zulus perform the ‘Dance of the Small Shields’; Durban’s ‘Golden Mile’ beachfront washed by the warm Indian Ocean; Bunny Chow—the must-try fast food of Durban; Bronze memorial to Mahatma Gandhi at the Phoenix Settlement.



THE PERSON

Champion of the Underdog



TV presenter
Lucy Cooke
hangs out with
a sloth at the
London Zoo.

TWO FUZZ BALLS cuddle under a towel. They yawn. One hugs a plush giraffe, then topples over. Kittens? Actually, they're the inhabitants of Costa Rica's Aviaros Sloth Sanctuary and the stars of a 90-second video titled "Meet the Sloths." Now meet that viral hit's British mastermind, **Lucy Cooke**—zoologist, TV host, author, and National Geographic emerging explorer. Whether tweeting about dung beetles in Kenya or swimming with pink dolphins in the Amazon for her Nat Geo Wild show, *Freaks and Creeps*, Cooke broadcasts the delights and plights of the "uncharismatic microfauna."

Why do you love "ugly" animals? Freaks of nature tell fascinating stories of evolution, but they don't get enough attention.

What are the weirdest of the weird?

In South Africa you can see the pangolin, an anteater covered in large scales that work as armor. It looks like a walking pinecone, or like an extra from *Star Trek*. Then in Borneo, not far from where everyone goes to see orangutans, there's a sanctuary in Labuk Bay for proboscis monkeys, which have potbellies, what looks like Donald Trump's hair, and big dangling noses that amplify their barks.

You love sloths. Where is the best place to see them? Costa Rica has a famous sanctuary, but just as wonderful is one near Medellín, Colombia, called Aiunau.

Favorite places to travel? On islands, animals evolve in isolation. Tasmania is like a Noah's ark for lost freaks, from the duck-billed platypus to the Tasmanian devil. You can walk among creatures that walked alongside the dinosaurs.

Did any place change you? Brazil's Pantanal wetland is like [naturalist] David Attenborough on acid. Virtually all the animals are oversize—jaguars, anacondas, flightless birds, the capybara rodent. The landscape is surreal.

What advice do you have for travelers?

Do your research. Visit sanctuaries. Remember that the place is often as good as the guides: A great one can bring a place alive. —Katie Knorovsky

OKINAWA

Jewel of Japan



In Okinawa you'll experience beauty beyond your imagination. For in a land where life under the sea is as beautiful as life above, it's possible you'll never want to resurface in your old life.



One of the countless blissful beaches that await visitors to Okinawa (top); off Yonaguni divers explore stone formations suggestive of ancient ruins (above)

No wonder Okinawa is an ideal choice for those seeking a break from the norm. With domestic flights connecting through major Japanese cities, even the most distant U.S. vacationers can shed their daily grind and bask in Okinawa's blue ocean in just a day's journey. The island's splendor is transcendent, and Mother Nature's expanse will excite even the most jaded of travelers. One thing is for sure, no matter where else you've been or from where you come, you'll find sun, beaches, and world-class water sports to take you far from the world you left behind.

EXPLORE: Crystalline Waters

Okinawa is the best place in Japan for all types of water activities, and chief among them is diving. Discover its gorgeous undersea world—home to some 360 types of corals, five types of sea turtles, manta rays, whale sharks, tropical fish, and other vibrant

marine life—at a myriad of outstanding dive spots renowned for their clarity and perfect water temperatures year-round. Don't miss Japan's westernmost island, **Yonaguni**, which holds an underwater treasure trove filled with breathtaking and mysterious ruins that will delight divers as they swim around this unexplained marine city. **Ishigaki Island**, southwest of Okinawa main island, possesses paradisiacal beaches, untouched tropical rain forests, lush mangrove rivers, and one of the world's largest coral reef systems, accessible at many dive points. The **Kerama Islands**, just a short boat trip away, are well known for their surrounding crystal blue waters, which are transparent for nearly 200 feet. With intricate coral reefs and colorful fish found off of almost any beach, it's no surprise that bathers and visitors are physically and spiritually renewed with a swim in these beautiful waters.

www.visitokinawa.jp



ENCOUNTER: Vibrant Culture

Visit one of Okinawa's nine world heritage sites to immerse yourself in the history of the Ryukyu kingdom, which began in the 15th century.

Shurijo Castle, located on the island of Okinawa, is the palace of the Ryukyu kingdom and played a central role in political and religious life. This palace is surrounded by various sites of historical interest, including **Shureimon**, the main gate reconstructed after WWII, and **Tamaudun**, the Royal tombs built in 1501. Shiisaa, or guard lions, like those seen outside Tamaudun, are thought to ward off evil and bring good fortune and can be found throughout Okinawa. The many cultural influences found in Okinawa have contributed to the development of Japan's martial art's tradition—specifically karate, Okinawa's most famous export!

DISCOVER: Abundant Nature

Uncover the best of the natural world by hiking, swimming with sea turtles, bird-watching, surfing, and enjoying other activities suitable for the whole family. Ferns carpeting the ground and beautiful birds—including rare species—characterize the nature area of **Yanbaru**, on the island of Okinawa. **Iriomote Island** is called the last unexplored region in Japan and is also known as the Galápagos of the East because of its extensive green space. This island is home to peculiar animals like the Iriomote wild cat, which can only be encountered here. Experience nature's bounty on Iriomote by jungle trekking, canoeing through one of Japan's largest mangrove forests, or keeping a lookout for the beautiful subtropical landscapes.

UNWIND: Soothing Lifestyle

Because of the Okinawans' inherently healthful diet and culture, it's no surprise that the highest concentration of centenarians lives there. So when you go, unwind by immersing yourself in the Okinawan lifestyle. Visit **Taketomi**, a traditional town where you can enjoy a leisurely tour around the village on a wagon drawn by a water buffalo and see flowers peeking out from stone walls, Ryukyuan homes with red-tile roofs, and the sandy streets. Be sure to further relax by lounging in the peacefulness of these subtropical islands, where even in January and February the average high temperature is around 70 degrees, making Okinawa the perfect place to travel any time of year. Plan your visit at www.visitokinawa.jp

Photos (from top): Shurijo Castle is part of the rich history and culture of Okinawa; a waterfall on Iriomote Island; shiisaa, or guard lions, can be seen throughout Okinawa; enjoy a tour of Taketomi on a wagon drawn by a water buffalo.

Map: Okinawa is easily accessible from major cities in Asia.



OKINAWA

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THE LAUNCH

To Infinity and Beyond

WHAT DO ACTOR ASHTON KUTCHER, soprano Sarah Brightman, and comedian Russell Brand have in common? They're future space cadets. With the inaugural passenger flight of Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic set for late this year, superstars and space tourists will have the opportunity to blast to a suborbital point approximately ten times the altitude typically reached by commercial aircraft. ¶ **Spaceports are popping up** around the globe with eight in the U.S., including Spaceport America, the home of Virgin Galactic. Set among the cattle ranches and creosote bushes of Las Cruces, New Mexico, the futuristic facility is the base from which future astronauts will blast off to see the curvature of Earth, peer hundreds of miles into the inky depths of space, and experience a few moments of weightlessness. ¶ The adventure comes at a stratospheric cost of \$200,000. Tickets will drop to \$100,000 or less when Armadillo Aerospace and XCOR Aerospace begin service. With the final frontier on the horizon, staying earthbound suddenly seems old-fashioned. —TERESA BITLER



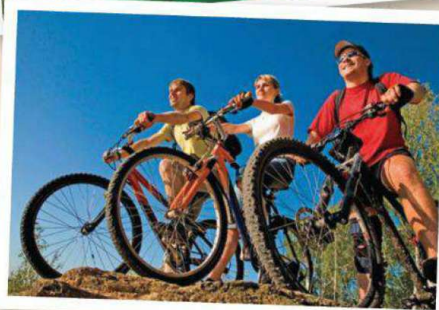
*New Mexico's
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America is
ground zero
for commercial
space travel.*

MARK HOLM/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX

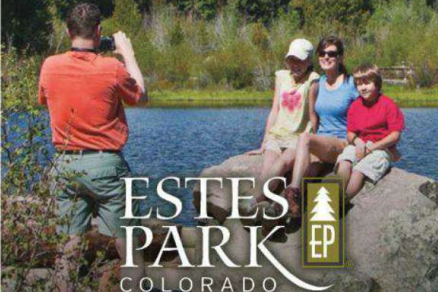
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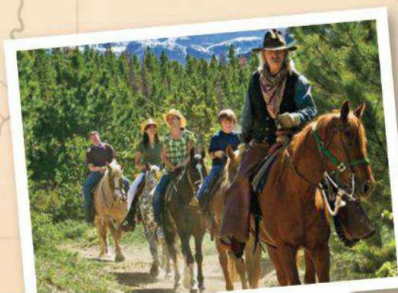


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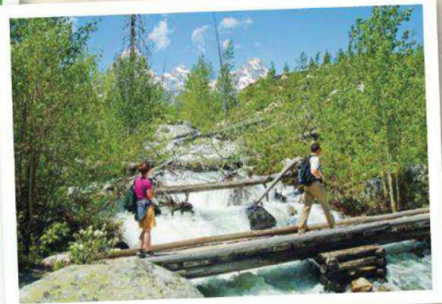
STAY AND PLAY IN ESTES PARK.

The town of Estes Park, Colorado is perfect for anyone who delights in being five minutes away from the crystal alpine lakes, lofty mountain peaks, and abundant wildlife in the Estes Valley and nearby Rocky Mountain National Park. Though every season in Estes Park offers amusement, summer and fall are great times to go on kid-friendly hikes that wind through beautiful landscapes and lead to breathtaking views. Spend time at the Lake Estes Marina, where you can rent a boat or go on a fishing excursion. Nearby, other fun family activities include cycling, horseback riding, and rock climbing. There are over 300 miles of hiking and recreation trails that compose the perfect playground to entertain the whole family. Start planning your visit at VisitEstesPark.com.



DISCOVER WYOMING'S NATURAL WONDERS.

Warm days, cool starry nights, wide-open spaces, and panoramic vistas set the stage for a variety of outdoor activities such as scenic drives, amazing wildlife viewing, visits to stunning geothermal and geological features, and expeditions the whole family will treasure.



YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

The unspoiled splendor of this living museum makes it one of America's greatest treasures. In addition to millions of acres of wilderness, an enormous network of hiking trails, and abundant wildlife, you'll discover spectacular waterfalls, lakes, canyons, geysers, and hot springs in this iconic park. Old Faithful has long wowed visitors with its dazzling display of thousands of gallons of water shooting up in the air as high as 184 feet, and the striking rainbow of colors of Grand Prismatic, the park's largest hot spring, has left them breathless. With multiple access points, all roads lead to Yellowstone National Park!

GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK

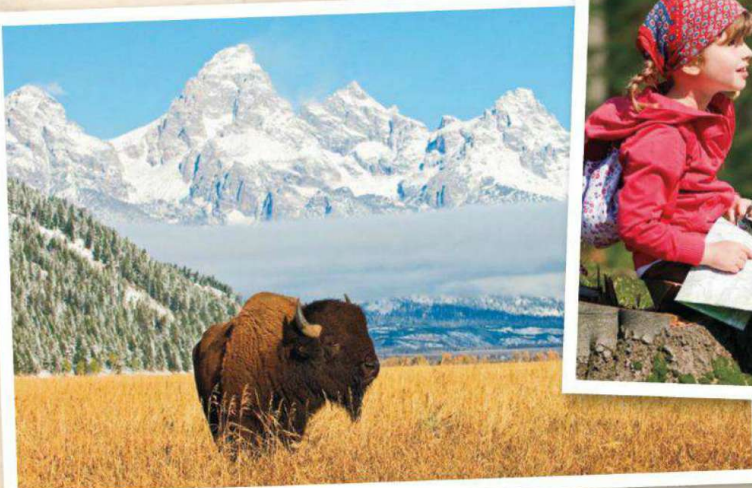
The jagged peaks of this ethereal mountain landscape above the Jackson Hole Valley make it the ideal escape for camping, hiking, boating, climbing, and wildlife viewing. Formed along a fault in the Earth's crust millions of years ago, it is home to dramatic peaks, vibrant wildflower meadows, crystalline alpine lakes, bubbling streams, winding rivers, and a host of birds, elk, and deer. Be sure to bring your camera to capture these incredible images!

WILDERNESS AND WILDLIFE

With millions of acres of wilderness, forests, and national parks to explore, it's no wonder that amazing wildlife can be seen. Depending on where you are, you can see herds of buffalo grazing, as well as elk, deer, moose, bison, wolves, and bears—and more than 300 species of birds. The lakes and rivers are filled with trout and other game fish, and in the marshes you'll find waterfowl such as trumpeter swans.

ADVENTURE AWAITS

Wyoming's diverse terrain provides the ideal backdrop for exploring the outdoors with your family. From stunning campsites, breathtaking hikes, fishing, and relaxing boat and float trips to mountain biking, waterskiing, white-water rafting, and rock climbing, there's something for everyone. For more information or to plan your trip, visit wyomingtourism.org.

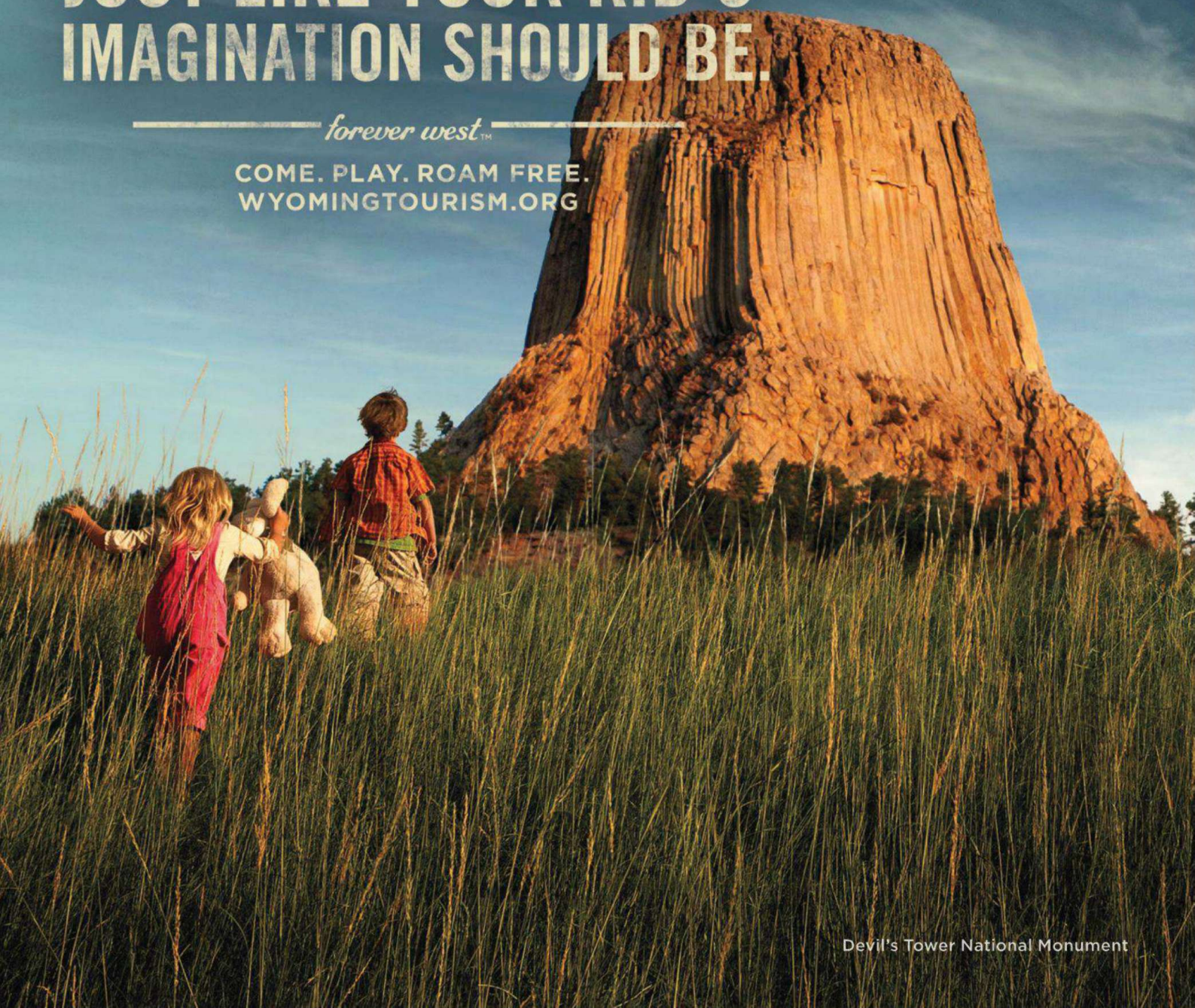




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Devil's Tower National Monument

IDAHO. ADVENTURES IN LIVING.

They'll never forget the name of their horse on that mountain trail ride. The Oregon Trail that they study in school is real when they drink from the same natural spring that the pioneers wrote about in their journals. Sacajawea will mean more than a face on a coin when they visit her homeland. Making it fun for kids to feel history and play outdoors is what an Idaho vacation delivers.

Take a look at some of Idaho's must-do adventures.



IDAHO IS FOR... EXPLORERS!

This year is a great time to head out with the kids to learn more about Idaho history; just 150 years ago on the morning of March 4, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln signed a congressional act creating the Idaho Territory.

Begin by exploring the Salmon and Lemhi Valleys where Sacajawea's people met the Lewis and Clark expedition. At the Sacajawea Center in Salmon, you can learn about their experiences. Explore the 132-mile Sacajawea Historic Byway that will take you through this incredible part of Idaho, much of it the same as the Corps of Discovery experienced it.

After leaving the Salmon Valley, Lewis and Clark and their men went north, re-entering Idaho over Lolo Pass. Orient yourself with a stop at the Lolo Pass visitor center and discover how vital the Nez Perce

Tribe was to the expedition's success. The Northwest Passage Scenic Byway passes a number of important camp sites, most with interpretation that you'll want to take the time to absorb.

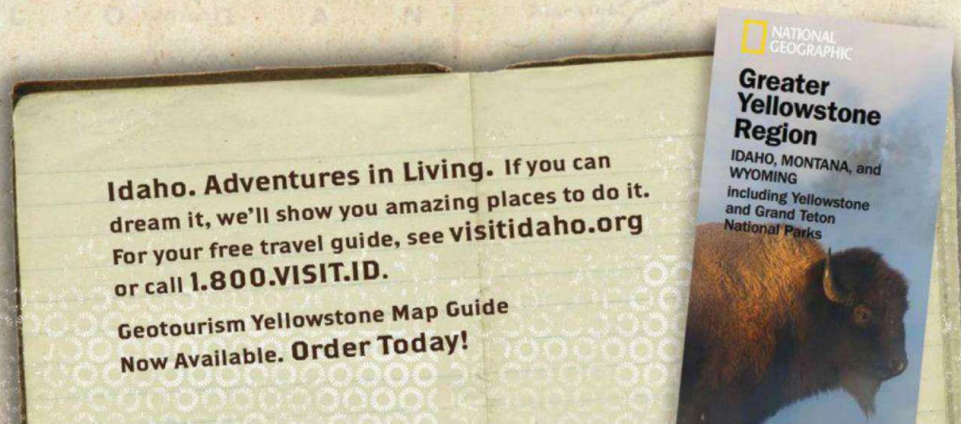
Another option for making history come alive is to follow the route of the Oregon Trail as it crosses southern Idaho. The main route through Idaho begins in the southeastern part of the state near the town of Montpelier, where an outstanding interpretative center is well worth visiting. The Pioneer Scenic Byway will take you north to Soda Springs (commonly called "Beer Springs" by early explorers and settlers) where you can still try the naturally carbonated water, just as the pioneers did.

The route of the Oregon Trail will link you to no fewer than seven scenic byways, with opportunities to pause at the interpretative signs and centers that help you glimpse the difficult journey of American pioneers.

To get really up close and personal with the trail, grab your GPS and do some geocaching.

The hardest part of visiting Idaho is deciding which historic trails to explore! Plan an amazing adventure of your own — start at visitidaho.org, where you can order a free travel guide, National Geographic's Greater Yellowstone Mapguide and the Top Ten Scenic Drives of the Northern Rockies.

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DAISANN McLANE

Remembrance of Things Past

MY FEET HURT FROM walking in circles, and my head feels as if it's going to explode with frustration. For about the fifth time in the past half hour I pause at an intersection in this old neighborhood in Shanghai and fish around in my bag for the map and my magnifying lens. The Chinese writing on the map taunts me—it grows smaller and less decipherable no matter how I position the lens. Still, I try, painstakingly, to match up the teeny wiggles and strokes with the street signs and the numbers marked on the buildings around me. The place I'm looking for ought to be right here, but nothing about the area resembles the street of my memory.

Six months ago I visited Shanghai for the first time, with my friend Leslie. She travels there a lot and zips around the alleys of the city's residential districts like a local. Having a Shanghai-savvy pal as my guide was a treat; I happily followed her into a maze of *shikumen*, low-rise tenements filled with working-class Shanghai families.

One of the great things about travel is that it gives us an excuse to declare a time-out from our daily business and watch others going about theirs. In Shanghai, Leslie and I jumped into the city's river of life and rode its currents for hours. We grabbed pillowy pork buns from ladies hovering over bamboo steamers, floated through the flotsam of pushcarts and rickety bicycles piled high with curious cargo (mattresses! chickens in cages!), admired the chubby faces of toddlers peeking out from cotton slings on their mothers' chests. At last, we washed up in a shadowy antiques shop covered with the dust of ages. Inside, a man introduced himself as Mr. Wong. Out of thin air (well, all right, out of an old cabinet in the back) he produced an astonishingly beautiful green silk Chinese jacket trimmed with rabbit fur. Leslie bought it without even bargaining, not wanting to spoil the treasure handed to us.

Now, back in Shanghai, I'm pounding the pavement with map in hand trying to find that marvelous place. As my cheerful whim transforms, over the course of an hour, into a cranky determination,

I begin to realize something: I'm not irritable because I can't locate Mr. Wong's old shop. I'm upset because I'm after something far more difficult—and far more meaningful—to recover: the pure joy of my first day in Shanghai.

Memory is the invisible spirit that guides, informs, and often haunts our journeys. For me, travel and memory are so entwined, I'm sometimes unsure where one ends and the other begins. When I was young, I'd create little stories about adventures to faraway lands, based on books I'd read or photos I'd seen in *National Geographic*. Decades later, when I finally did visit Tokyo, or Rome, or Australia's outback, I felt I was retracing my steps. The memories of my imaginary travels were so strong that they had the power to shift reality.

As I traveled, my travel memories—real ones, now—grew deeper and began to seem almost like living things. I'd find myself in some wonderful new place, or experiencing something extraordinary, and I'd feel the tickle of memory stirring, spreading its tendrils across the landscape. Every destination became suffused with my emotions, my personal story. Years later, when I yearned to go back in time and revisit the person I used to be—the woman thrilled to be standing at a bar sipping prosecco at 10 a.m. in the Venice market, giddily singing folk songs in a Greenwich Village coffeehouse, nursing her

heartsickness on a beach in Mexico—I only needed to travel to these places again to find her there. It never occurred to me that these places where my memories, my past selves, came alive so vividly could vanish.

Deep down I understand that change is constant, that the world does not—and should not—freeze like a snapshot so it always will match one traveler's beloved version of it. However, I figured that I'd have a few decades of slack before the world I remembered and the world of today parted company, shifting dramatically out of sync.

It used to be that if I fell in love with a café in Paris or a particular old building in Delhi, I didn't have to worry about it disappearing the next week. But in our lifetime, billions more people have populated the planet, hundreds of millions are traveling, and global development has ramped up to warp speed. Nowadays I head out to breakfast in Hong Kong every morning with fingers crossed that my favorite noodle place is still open for business and not

swathed in scaffolding or covered with "For Rent" signs.

The map in my hand is only six months old, but today that's a traveler's eternity. When I finally approach a passerby and show him Mr. Wong's shop address, the man points down the road to a construction site that stretches several blocks, then to a forest of hulking cranes that I'd deliberately been trying not to notice.

"Gone," says the man in Chinese. "All gone now."

I nod my thanks to the man, fold up the map, turn slowly away. As I walk, I peel my memories from this aching hole in the ground and move Mr. Wong's shop, the shikumen tenements, and the rest of this old Shanghai neighborhood to the place I know I won't ever lose them: my traveler's heart. ■



Old ways adapt to new days in a rapidly changing Shanghai.

DAISANN McLANE divides her time between New York and Hong Kong. Follow her on Twitter, @Daisann_McLane.

BOYD MATSON

The Best Worst Trip Ever

THE SECURITY LINE at my home airport in Washington, D.C., isn't where I expected to get my first reminder that I should have trained a little more for 19 days of trekking the mountains of Peru. I assumed that lesson would be taught somewhere around 9,000 feet, on the Inca Trail. But before I even board the plane, the security agent tells me, "Sir, you need to remove those items from your shirt pockets"—forcing me to explain that those "items" can be removed only through diet and exercise. ¶ Admittedly, one of the bonuses I'm anticipating from this trip is the excess body baggage I hope to leave in the Andes, as there's no escaping the

extreme physical effort required to hike repeatedly over mountain passes, some higher than 15,000 feet, for almost three weeks. The Inca built many of these trails 500 years ago, and they're still the only way to reach all of our destinations—Machu Picchu and also a few seldom visited yet equally impressive Inca sites, such as Choquequirao; the water shrine Picha Unuyoc; and Vilcabamba, also called Espíritu Pampa, the last city of the Inca.

Our guide has arranged for tents, food, supplies, mules to transport our gear, mule handlers, cooks, and—as insurance—a couple of horses should anyone need the assistance of an equine taxi. In spite of these amenities, we will for the most part be sleeping on the ground, using rivers for baths and laundry, and surviving without phones, Internet, and electricity. We'll also be facing a high probability of occasional rain, maybe even snow, at altitudes where we sea-level dwellers have difficulty breathing. Inexplicably, my 22-year-old son, Taylor, and two couples agree to join me. They think it sounds like fun. My wife and many friends react differently: "That sounds like the worst trip ever."

Near the end of our first full day on the trail, I have a gnawing fear I will be forced to confess to my wife the three most difficult words in any relationship: "You were right." I had expected the beginning to be an easy warm-up—all downhill, from the village of Cachora to the Apurímac River, and then a short climb to camp. But after eight

hours and some 5,000 feet of steep descent, I remember that downhill is worse than uphill on old knees with no cartilage. Still, spirits are high. Adrenaline levels are, too, as we approach the Apurímac, where we will be pulled a hundred yards across while seated on a small metal plate swinging from a steel cable that is suspended high above a river whose name loosely translates to "god that roars." Five minutes after that rush, as we head up the other side of the canyon, the reality of where I am—both on the mountain and on the scale of high-altitude cardio fitness—hits with an unexpected thud. My legs announce that they've put in their eight hours and are through for the day. Unfortunately, we are fewer than a hundred feet into a 2,000-foot climb to the next campsite. No pumping adrenal glands speed to the rescue, so I have to concentrate on each step, willing my body forward like a toddler learning to walk, as the air hangs hot and heavy without even a whisper of a breeze.

I'm sweating so profusely, I have to dry my ears with a bandanna to hear, though the only sounds are my own noisy gasps for air. Taylor has also hit the wall, and neither of us can afford the energy to offer encouragement. When we finally collapse into our tent after 11 and a half hours on the trail, Taylor summons the strength to ask, "Are you as embarrassed as I am?" "No," I reply.

"I'm just relieved—the day's over and we made it." I assure him that tomorrow and every day after will get a bit easier, as we acclimatize. And they do, at least cardiowise, with Taylor practically running the trails by day three. But there are unexpected setbacks, any one of which, when later described to friends, elicits that familiar response: "That sounds like the worst trip ever."

We endure ten straight days of rain, which occasionally transforms the trail into a mud slide. On day five, we stop for lunch on a beautiful pass, but my knee locks up and I'm forced to descend the next 2,200 feet using trekking poles like canes. (Taylor suggests it could be a new episode of *Locked Up*

Abroad.) On day seven, the rain becomes a heavy snowstorm as we make our way up and over a 15,000-foot pass. The snow further complicates the process of going down 3,500 steep Inca stone steps, tricky enough with my bad knee. Then on day 13 we're crossing our tour's highest pass when, for a solid hour, BB-size hailstones pelt us. And did I mention the fighting that breaks out between the Peruvian Army and the Shining Path guerrillas, in the valley near Espíritu Pampa? For that, we reroute the second half of the trek.

Still, wherever we go, the scenery is breathtakingly beautiful, and when heavy rains trap Taylor and me in our tent for hours at a time, we have no choice but to talk—father and adult son discussing everything that's ever happened in our lives. At one point, Taylor turns to me and says, "Suffering is not fun, but it makes you a stronger, better person." I'm not sure that's always true, but for us, the accomplishment of not only surviving but also being able to laugh about our struggles at the end of each day left us both saying this was "the best trip ever." Oh yeah, and I also lost 15 pounds. ■



A rock and a hard place: hiking Peru's Inca Trail.

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CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

Is That Your Elbow in My Rib?

FLYING CAN FEEL like torture. The bone-dry cabin air is recycled. Spaces are ridiculously cramped. Passengers don't always have ready access to food, water, and restrooms. ¶ It's a fight waiting to happen—and happen it does. Flash points include seat territory disputes, scuffles over luggage space, and arguments about unruly kids. The reluctant referees are flight attendants who are part waiters, part playground monitors, part sentinels against potential terrorism. Here's how to short-circuit five common mid-air melees. ¶ Right-to-recliners: The average economy-class seat offers little legroom—the “pitch” between seats is around 28 to 34

inches—but when the guy in front of you reclines his seat as far as it goes, you're wedged in. Airlines created this problem by squeezing an extra row or two of seats on a plane, but it's up to passengers to solve it. Not the easiest thing, it turns out. On one side, you have those who think because they paid for the seat, they should be able to use it any way they want. On the other are folks who believe the seat should never be reclined, but simmer in resentment when the person in front does. You could jam the seat in front with a device like the controversial Knee Defender (frowned on by the FAA, though no airline I know of has banned it), which is all but guaranteed to start a rumble. The real solution is understanding that the space must be shared. Ask before leaning into it. Or, spend extra for a premium economy seat, which comes with a little more legroom. Another option: Ask to be seated in an exit row.

Armrest wars: The tight squeeze in economy class comes from all sides. With only 17 inches of space per seat, plus whatever you can negotiate on the armrests, many passengers find themselves packed in like wheat in a shock. I recall the case of Arthur Berkowitz, who on a flight from Anchorage to Philadelphia was seated next to a passenger “of size,” whose girth “required both armrests to be raised up and allowed for his body to cover half of my seat.” Berkowitz stood for most of the trip, instead. But even when there's room, who owns the armrests? If you're seated next to a window or aisle, one of the

armrests is yours to do with as you wish. But in the middle seat it's not so simple. Pushy passengers simply claim the space as if it's a landgrab, defending it against your elbow incursions with occasional “ahems” and glares. Don't become that person. Introduce yourself and smile. If you've done that early on, an armrest discussion later won't be a tinderbox.

Overhead bins: The space above your seat does not belong to you exclusively. Overhead bins are a source of endless conflict, especially now, when passengers max out their carry-ons in order to avoid paying checked-luggage fees. The answer is to carry a soft-sided bag, smaller than the maximum size allowed, that will fit, if necessary, in the space under your seat. What about the rest of your stuff? Check it or ship it ahead.

Scofflaws: It's true—failure to comply with a crew member's instructions is a federal crime. Offenses range from minor infractions, like unbuckling a seat belt before the plane has come to a complete stop, to more serious violations such as making a call on your smartphone while the plane is on final approach. It's hard to know which rules are there for your safety and which ones are just silly. For example, the rules prohibiting the use of in-flight electronics, which are being reconsidered as I write this, seem oddly inconsistent. Why am I not allowed to use my iPad, but the pilots can use theirs? More germane to this article, what's a passenger to do when someone breaks the rules? Tattle? Look the other way? As someone who has been both witness and perpetrator (I'm pretty addicted to my devices), my advice is to let go of the little stuff. The teen playing *Samurai*, a graphic video game, next to my five-year-old daughter? Beheading the enemy in front of a kindergartner is uncouth. But instead of making a fuss, I switched seats with my daughter.

OPKs: There's nothing that sets off the fireworks as much as Other People's Kids. On a recent flight from Honolulu to Los Angeles, I watched an elderly passenger who had the bad luck of being surrounded by screaming kids, one of them, unfortunately, my daughter, who, he remarked, “acted as if the plane was her personal playground.” I did not argue. She was behaving that way, and try as I did, couldn't be persuaded to just sit down and watch the romantic comedy *The Vow* playing on the flickering TV screens five rows away. Next to this hapless man, a newborn wailed. Behind him, a three-year-old with extreme aerophobia clung to her mother, weeping. It was the flight from hell for this poor gentleman. And yeah, for me, too. OPKs are unfixable. All the responsible parenting in the world can't make up for boredom or pressure in the ears or a really bad in-flight movie. May I recommend a nice pair of earplugs?

But while we need to give kids a pass, adults need to stop the childish behavior. Everything you need to know about surviving a flight, you probably learned in kindergarten. Use common sense. Think about others. Share. Flying isn't going to get any easier. I know what my mom would say: “Now, Chris, be nice.” ■



Kids can cause conflict, even when they're cute.

CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT addresses readers' travel problems. E-mail your story to celliott@ngs.org.

COSTAS CHRIST

Blueberry Fields Forever

CALL IT MY DOUBLE LIFE. Each spring I tuck my passport away and turn into a blueberry farmer, tending the crop on a 40-acre organic farm in Maine. Few of my white-collar colleagues know about this side of my life; even fewer of my fellow farmers have an inkling of my world travels, although at a recent farmers' meeting, one old-timer noted, "For a blueberry farmer, you sure do come and go a lot." These two realities felt worlds apart—until now. ¶ In recent years, a steady stream of visitors has been showing up at the farm: A couple from England with their two sons, a Russian grandmother and her daughter,

a family from India, French newlyweds, a band of Brazilian backpackers.

And more keep coming, signaling a travel movement that is related to the current farm-to-table food fad, but encompasses more. These travelers are driven by something deeper, seeking to connect with a place in a more meaningful, experiential way. They spend a day, sometimes several, immersing themselves in our way of life, fascinated by the ecosystem that surrounds Maine's native blueberries, from the wild bees that pollinate the flowers to the black bears that forage at night to the kestrels that swoop into the fields by day to snatch a wayward mouse nibbling at the fruit.

This role reversal was strange at first. Instead of being the curious visitor, I was the attraction, approached by travelers keen to tap into my life as a villager and eager for an authentic experience. But embracing these inquisitive wanderers helps keep our farm going. As my 74-year-old neighbor, Elliot Coleman, puts it, "We've never considered ourselves a tourist attraction, but we could not survive without the people who travel here to see what we do and buy what we grow, even offering to help with the chores." Sure, visitors have flocked to agricultural outposts before, from Tuscany to Napa, but the travelers I'm seeing are more purpose driven—happy warriors fighting for a cause bigger than the farms they visit. As with the global ecotourism movement that has helped protect nature and

save endangered species, the farm tourism movement today may help revive small family farms around the world.

My own farm is a case in point. In the 1980s, the Herrick family, who had been farming here for generations, could no longer sustain their way of life. Like thousands of other small farmers, they put their land up for sale. I borrowed \$5,000 for a down payment for two of their blueberry fields, and asked that they teach me to farm the way their forebears did—without pesticides and herbicides.

There is a satisfying, natural cycle. In the fall, I cover the fields—Maine's indigenous low-bush blueberry plants stand only 6 inches tall when fully grown—in a thick blanket of golden straw. When spring arrives, family and friends come together and we set the fields on fire—a technique originally taught to settlers by Native Americans, who have harvested these berries for centuries. After burning, the plants sprout thick foliage, but no fruit. The following summer, the same plants flower exuberantly, tripling, even quadrupling the yield. So we harvest each field every other year, with one always bearing fruit. By August, ripening plants turn entire landscapes into striking carpets of blue (the setting for Robert McCloskey's 1948 classic children's book, *Blueberries for Sal*).

We don't pick the berries; we "rake" them—another local tradi-

tion. Using a tool that looks like a steel comb with a handle, we scoop up the berries, pouring them into flat boxes. Then we blow away any chaff by emptying the boxes in front of a strong fan. The little blue gems that remain are packaged by hand for sale. Harvesting blueberries this way is not a get-rich-quick scheme, for sure, and until summer vacationers and world travelers started showing up, we, like so many small farmers, were fighting an uphill struggle to make it work. But these visitors don't just buy our blueberries; they gather around the processing table—sorting, packaging, and learning.

It is more than just a local phenomenon. In Tanabe, Japan, villagers growing heirloom oranges hope to turn back the tide of rural-to-urban migration that threatens their thousand-year-old culture by welcoming travelers. Maya communities in Belize have found new ways to revitalize traditional cacao farming, and visitors learn about the origins of chocolate. And in Montenegro, with its own blueberry heritage, travelers and locals gather in the Prokletije Mountains for the Plav Blueberry Festival, which helps sustain the rural economy.

Last September, more than 50,000 visitors from around the world attended the Common Ground Country Fair near the town of Unity, a two-hour drive on meandering roads from my farm. The annual celebration includes sharing local folklore, sampling favorite dishes, soaking up gardening techniques, and watching demonstrations from plowing a field with horses to building a backyard greenhouse. There are evenings of live music and dancing (save the dates: September 20-22). This new wave of back-to-the-land explorers helps small farms make the leap from a thing of the past into a possibility for the future—good news for a traveling farmer like me. ■



Fruit loop: Tourism may save the family farm.

COSTAS CHRIST writes about the changing world of travel. E-mail him through travel_talk@ngs.org.

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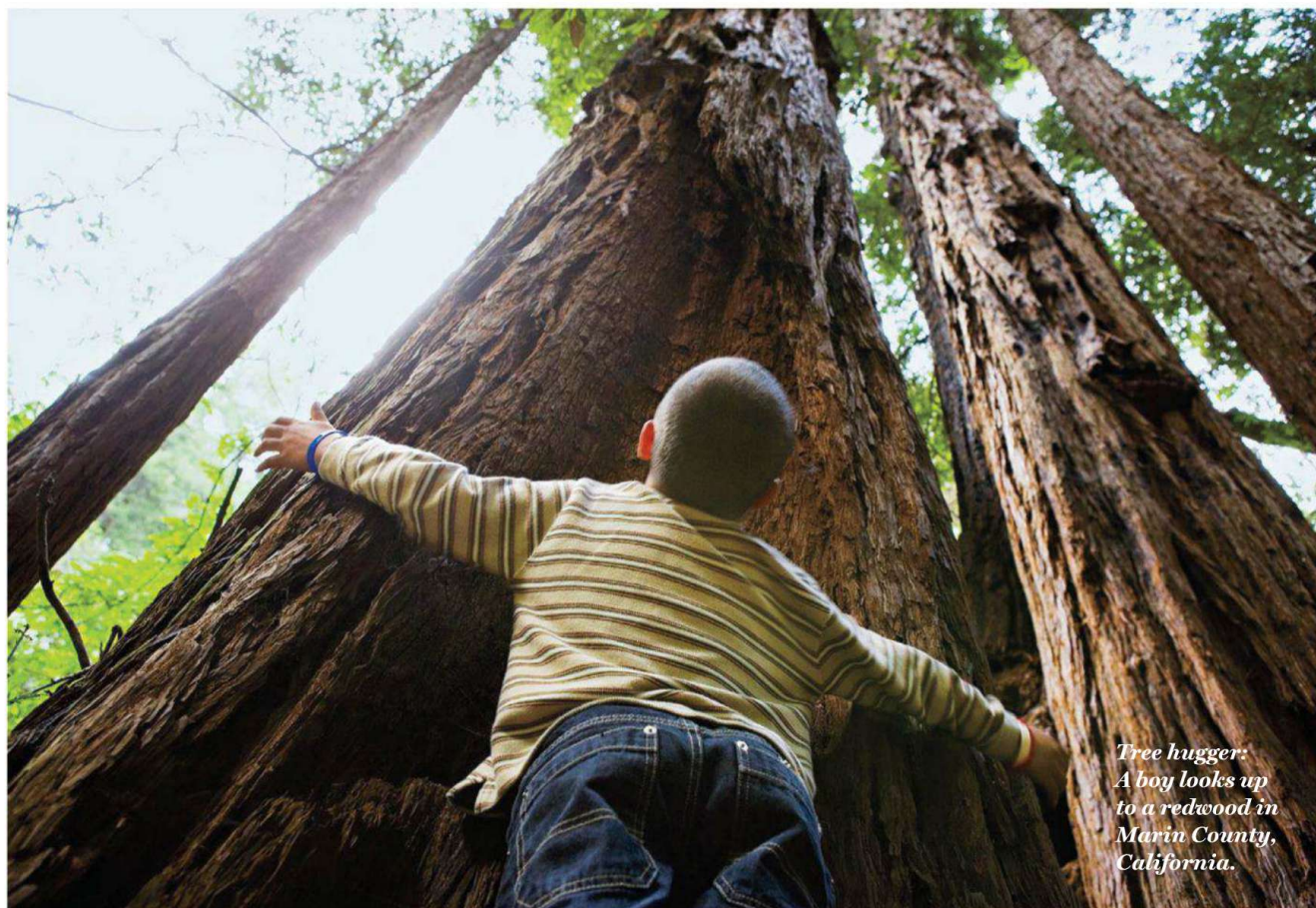
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Outdoor Playpen

THREE PARKS WHERE NATURE RULES



*Tree hugger:
A boy looks up
to a redwood in
Marin County,
California.*

MUIR WOODS

Giants Among Us

JOHN MUIR CALLED the Marin County woods “the best tree-lovers monument that could possibly be found in all the forests of the world.”

Located only 11 miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge near San Francisco, Muir Woods National Monument puts some of nature’s most colossal creations within reach of little feet, hands, and imaginations.

“Muir Woods is home to a grove of giant redwood trees that reach to the sky and surround you in a way that is best experienced in person,” says David Shaw of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy. “Redwoods are among the

tallest tree species in the world. The average age of the redwoods here ranges from 400 to 800 years old, and many ancient specimens have been around for more than a millennium.”

Although the towering, ancient trees will make kids feel extra small, learning the story of who protected the woods can help children stand a little taller.

William Kent, the man who donated the 295 acres to create the Muir Woods monument on some of the most valued real estate in the world, grew up in Marin and played in similar redwood groves. That childhood experience inspired him to save the redwoods as an adult.

“Young people can learn about young William Kent when they visit here,” says interpretative ranger Timothy Jordan.

“Kent’s early connection with nature fostered his love of the outdoors. As an adult, he witnessed the destruction of many Bay Area redwood forests. This, with the writings of John Muir, inspired Kent’s conservationism.” Walking (and playing) in, on, and around the redwoods will help kids understand why young Kent was so mesmerized by the trees. Ranger Jordan encourages children to lie down and look up at the treetops, hug a redwood tree, touch the bark, and start a nature journal as Muir did. “Have kids find a redwood spray the same age as them; count the rings in trees and learn how to measure a tree,” he advises.

After all the interaction, the kids just may be ready to rest—at least for a moment. Take this time to “be quiet and listen to the sounds of the forest,” says Shaw.

DINOSAUR PROVINCIAL PARK

Canada's Boneyard

ON THE DRIVE southeast from Calgary to Canada's badlands, eerie hoodoos (rock pinnacles rising up from the Red Deer River Valley) first signal to kids they've time-traveled back some 75 million years. Although mesmerizing, this wind-and-water-carved landscape is but a gateway to a real *T. rex*-size dinosaur adventure.

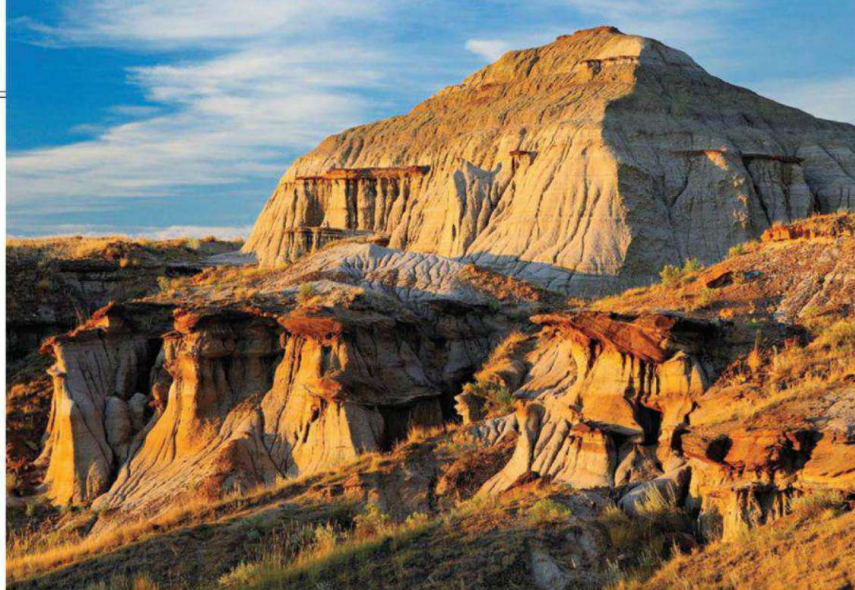
Dinosaur Provincial Park—a UNESCO World Heritage site—is the final resting place of countless dinosaurs. During the late Cretaceous period, it was a marshy coastal plain, and dinosaurs thrived in its warm, subtropical climate. Now it's dry and barren—except for the treasure of fossilized bones the animals left behind. “The most amazing thing you first notice is the amount of dinosaur bones out there. It's the real deal—no cement dinosaur statues here. You step on actual dinosaur bones, and sometimes you see a giant bone sticking out of nowhere and think, shouldn't that be in a museum?” says family travel writer Jennifer Merrick, who made a pilgrimage to the park with her nine-year-old son.

More than 40 species of dinosaurs have been discovered at the park, and although hundreds of specimens have been removed for display in museums, kids won't notice or care. “As soon as you get out to the fossil fields, kids will find bones right, left, and center. There are so many dinosaur bones that soon kids won't even look for them anymore because they're so common. Instead, kids start searching for microfossils, dinosaur teeth, and crocodile scutes, the bony plates under the skin of prehistoric amphibians,” says Merrick.

Because most of the area is a protected natural preserve, access to the fossil sites is restricted and guided tours are limited—so make reservations for the hands-on Fossil Safari well in advance. Try to sign up for Dinosaur Day Camp (ages 7-12) to learn excavation techniques and tour the park's badlands. During the fossil-finding program, kids learn what to look for and then are set free to dino-hunt, without digging or pocketing any treasures, of course.

Helpful human and printed guides assist kids in identifying what they've found. These moments of discovery make dinosaurs exciting again, even for older kids who have relegated their models and books to storage in the attic.

“Being there rekindled my son's love of dinosaurs,” says Merrick. “After visiting



Canyons, buttes, and cliffs characterize Alberta's Dinosaur Provincial Park.

the park, we stopped for one last look from the edge of the canyon. My son pointed out toward the badlands, saying, ‘Look, there's an *Albertosaurus* [a bipedal predator who roamed western North America more 70 million years ago].’

“Learning about the history and the time period made the dinosaurs come to life,” says Merrick.

SLEEPING BEAR DUNES

On America's Inland Sea

AT FIRST GLANCE, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore looks familiar to kids. The drifting sand, seagulls, and miles of turquoise water all add up to one thing—the ocean.

But then, somewhere—maybe on the 7.4-mile Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive or while rolling down the pile of sand called Dune Climb (dubbed “the sacrificial dune” because it's the sole heap of sand

visitors are allowed to trample)—the kids stop, realize this is landlocked Michigan, and ask, “How did the ocean get here?”

It didn't. This is Lake Michigan. It's a lake—albeit a great one—and the water is fresh, not salty, says Lisa Myers, chief of interpretation and visitor services at Sleeping Bear Dunes.

“When my family comes here from New England, they all have to taste the water,” she says. “The area looks like Cape Cod. You can't believe this isn't the coast.”

Well, maybe not the Atlantic, Pacific, or Gulf coast, but this national lakeshore was created in 1970 by the federal government to preserve a scenic chunk of this extensive coast—the U.S. shores of the eight-state Great Lakes coastline. “Playing on the sacrificial dune is like being in a big, huge sandbox,” says Myers, but there's so much more to the shore. Help kids view the park through a wider lens by walking along one of the 35 miles of sandy Lake Michigan beach.

“With their feet on the sand and in the water, kids can see that there are waves,” says Myers, “but that there are no tides. They can spot swimming otters and beavers, and see the high cliffs with the perched dunes way up top.”

“In winter, they can walk the beaches to see all the ice formations and crashing waves,” she says. “We offer ranger-led snowshoe walks in January and February, where kids can look for animal tracks. And, when it's windy, they can stand on the Dune Climb and feel the forces of nature. It's almost geology in motion with the smaller grains of sand moving faster than the bigger ones. The kids can run or roll down the hill, too, which is a lesson in gravity and a whole lot of fun.” ■



Shore fun on Lake Michigan.

Adapted from 100 Places That Can Change Your Child's Life (National Geographic, 2012), by Editor in Chief Keith Bellows

A Georgia Peach

IN ATLANTA, A MODERN TAKE ON SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY

By BILL ADDISON



Local gems include (clockwise from top left) *Empire State South*, the *High Museum of Art*, *Georgia Aquarium*, and *Cakes & Ale*.

ATLANTA THRIVES ON paradox. An ever expanding vista of skyscrapers peeks above the canopy of trees that line its streets. The city strives to be a cutthroat business leader and is home to 15 *Fortune* 500 companies, but a spirit of southern hospitality still prevails (though these days you may as quickly be offered a Coke as a glass of sweet tea). “People tend to forget that Atlanta is young compared to other American cities,” says author and illustrator Tray Butler, a Georgia native. “New York was founded 200 years earlier. Even Sunbelt superstars like Charlotte or Houston are technically our older siblings.

What we have is a youthful exuberance, a kind of rebellious spirit, and yes, some growing pains. Atlanta is like a teenager: It can’t stop changing.” Conventioneers who visit only downtown (which empties of locals at night) miss the charm and diversity of the city’s many singular neighborhoods.

DAY ONE

MORNING *A Sense of History*

The Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site spreads across 42 acres of downtown’s Sweet Auburn district, long a hub of African-American businesses. At the **King Center** (where the civil rights leader

and his wife, Coretta Scott King, are enshrined), procure tickets for daily tours of MLK’s birth home. Details glimpsed in the two-story Victorian house wonderfully humanize the icon: It turns out he was a shrewd player of Monopoly, for example. Nearby **Ebenezer Baptist Church**, where King was co-pastor with his father, reopened in 2011 after four years and \$8 million to restore the Gothic Revival building exactly as it was in the 1960s, including walls painted a warm peach and the original pulpit microphones that broadcast King’s sermons.

Take a taxi about one mile south on Boulevard, the area’s main thoroughfare,

to the gently hilly **Oakland Cemetery**, established in 1850. Stroll under magnolias and oaks among monuments, obelisks, and mausoleums of some of the city's early wealthy families, as well as more than 3,900 graves marked "CSA," for Confederate States Army. Purchase the \$4 map from the gift shop to find the humble headstone for *Gone With the Wind* author Margaret Mitchell. Refuel across the street, sipping on the city's most deftly made espresso at **Octane Coffee**. It shares space with **Little Tart Bakery**, a neighborhood favorite for quiche and pastries made using local, seasonal fruit.

AFTERNOON Hot Shops

Once a badland of abandoned stockyards and mills, the city's **Westside neighborhood** recently transformed into a wonderland of refurbished warehouses full of bespoke shops. Urbane **Billy Reid**, where staffers will likely offer you a bourbon, in the Westside Provisions District complex and preppy **Sid Mashburn** in Westside Urban Market next door (a walking bridge joins the two redbrick complexes) offer different takes on dressing the southern gentleman in style. Mashburn's wife also runs a store, **Ann Mashburn**, featuring her in-house designs including shirtdresses and pencil and wrap skirts. Across the parking lot, design guru



Jonathan Adler mixes whimsy with function in his eclectic shop, featuring items such as voluptuous glass lamps, pillows with psychedelic prints, and vases imprinted with a single, puckered mouth.

Martin Luther King, Jr., was born on Auburn Street where he spent the first 12 years of his childhood.

EVENING Dixie Dining

"Southern food is in vogue across the country, and in Atlanta, where we might have scoffed at our regional cooking in the past, we've embraced it as well," says Steven Satterfield, a Georgia native who is chef and co-owner of farmhouse-chic **Miller Union** in the Westside. Satterfield honors his roots without resorting to southern-fried clichés: Start with small plates meant for sharing, like the local farm egg baked in celery cream and served with wedges of grilled bread, and move on to duck confit nestled against cider-braised cabbage and whiskeyed apples.

Eating regionally means embracing the seasons, and no local chef highlights the region's larder better than Billy Allin, chef/owner of cozy **Cakes & Ale** in Decatur, the progressive town that is to Atlanta what Berkeley is to San Francisco. Allin weaves Italian and Mediterranean recipes among southern flavors on his changing menu. Look for dishes like pillowy gnocchi with lamb *ragù* and green tomatoes along with North Carolina

KRISTA ROSSOW/NGS

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trout roasted in the wood-burning oven and served with a tangy bacon and green onion mayonnaise sauce.

DAY TWO

MORNING *Water World*

Georgia Aquarium, across the street from downtown's 21-acre Centennial Olympic Park, measures more than 600,000 square feet and holds 10 million gallons of fresh and salt water, making it one of the world's largest aquatic zoos. Its many spectacles are worth the plunge, but start early to beat the crowds: Order tickets online to avoid lines and secure seats for *Dolphin Tales*, a show filled with special effects that manage not to detract from the leaping headliners. The whole visit takes at least three hours. Be sure to check out the rare, wide-mouthed whale sharks and the white, cuddly-looking beluga whales.

AFTERNOON *Midtown Museums*

In Midtown, the city's cultural hub, stop for a lunchtime oyster po'boy or a fried chicken salad at **Empire State South**, the restaurant owned by *Top Chef* judge Hugh Acheson.

The white, curving, unapologetically modernist building of the **High Museum of Art**, by Pritzker Prize-winning architects Richard Meier and Renzo Piano, stands out majestically along a verdant stretch of busy Peachtree Street. A touring exhibition showcasing the works of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo and her husband, Diego Rivera, is a current draw (on display through May 12). Be sure, though, to spend time with the permanent southern folk art exhibit on the top floor, full of quirky, poignant caricatures with names like "Take My Yoke Upon You and Learn of Me Saith Jesus." **Museum of Design Atlanta**, with its modern concrete-and-glass veneer, opened across from the High in early 2011. It has no permanent collection, so shows are in a constant, fascinating flux: Past exhibits



Dogwood blooms usher in spring in Piedmont Park.

included skateboard art, Italian motorcycles, and portions of the AIDS Memorial Quilt.

EVENING *Laugh Out Loud*

At the edge of **Inman Park**, a great walking neighborhood and Atlanta's first residential "suburb," planned in the 1800s, chef Robert Phalen uses imagination at his restaurant **One Eared Stag**. Adventurous carnivores will sigh over beef belly with pickled eggplant and roasted bone marrow with onion marmalade; tamer palates will love the chicken schnitzel and, for dessert, chocolate *pot de crème*. A few blocks away, **Dad's Garage**, home to the city's premier improv troupe, inspires belly laughs with outrageous, unscripted performers acting along loose themes like the Civil War or a genre of music (rock, hip-hop) chosen by the audience. ■

JUST IN

Wander among art booths and flowering trees at the **Atlanta Dogwood Festival**, April 19-21, an annual event established before World War II. **Piedmont Park**, the 185-acre green space built by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., hosts the event. The park is also the starting point for the 2.25-mile Eastside Trail, the first major segment of the city's **BeltLine**, a 22-mile loop of proposed urban development along abandoned railway lines.

KRISTA ROSSOW/ANGS



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Taos is launching **Adventures de Taos**—a campaign that promotes Taos’s unique adventures from a local’s perspective. The adventures await at taos.org/adventure.



Hiking trails abound in the alpine mountains of New Mexico. Photo: Michael DeYoung

NEW MEXICO

Welcome to the Land of ENCHANTMENT



Whether visitors come to encounter authentic adventures, explore historic sites, marvel at impressive landscapes, or surround themselves with every aspect of the state’s rich heritage and culture, they’ll soon realize that the true enchantment of New Mexico resides in the friendly people who call it home. No matter when and where you travel, you’ll be under New Mexico’s spell. The brilliant sunsets and spirited history will allure you. The fabulous local cuisine and flourishing arts scene will charm you. The abundant adventures and world-renowned spas will captivate you for life. Discover the magic of the Land of Enchantment.

Popular New Mexico crafts and chilies for sale (above); petroglyphs near Santa Fe (top).
Photo: Chris Corrie

The Rio Grande Gorge

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Native American heritage is a strong part of New Mexico's culture.

New Mexico's land, people, and mix of civilizations deliver an adventure steeped in culture. New Mexico invites "sight doing": getting out of the car and experiencing a refreshing sense of connectedness with the past, the land, with family, and with self. The natural beauty and timeless images of New Mexico will continue to vividly exist, even after one leaves.

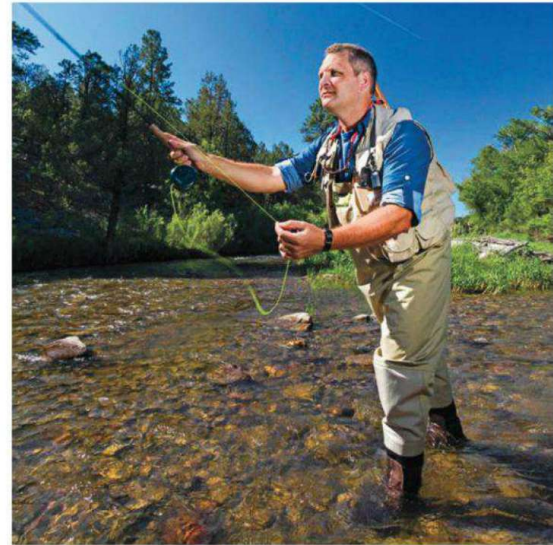
With warm days beneath blue skies, and cool, quiet evenings under the stars, New Mexico's landscapes are spectacular. Spacious vistas, bewitching plays of light, and a sense of purity have long attracted travelers, settlers, artists, and scientists.

Experience centuries of heritage in the ancient yet living culture of the state. New Mexico is rooted in a tradition rich in expression and is seen in the ancient Native American ruins, ghost towns, cliff dwellings, wagon trails, long abandoned forts; felt in the raw spirit that inhabits adobe cathedrals and piñon forests; and experienced every day in its bold cuisine and vibrant art.

New Mexico's springtime adventure should include stops at the unique museums, cultural centers, and monuments located in every corner of the state. From Native American relics to space exploration, and folk art to dinosaurs, New Mexico's cultural heritage is seen everywhere in the Land of Enchantment.

Outdoor enthusiasts will delight in the unlimited recreational opportunities—from cycling, skiing, and bird-watching to hunting, fishing, hiking, and wilderness tours. The springtime waters invite fly-fishing, rafting, canoeing, and kayaking.

New Mexico sings of the past, lives the present, and eagerly awaits its



Fly-fishing along the pristine rivers of New Mexico

future. It is ever unfolding in a distinct blend of mysterious beauty and majestic grandeur.

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Sipping a refreshing margarita at one of the many restaurants offering traditional New Mexican fare (left); Frijoles Canyon in Bandelier National Monument



Exploring Pueblo Bonito at Chaco Canyon

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Lift your spirits in Albuquerque, where every October the world's premier balloon event decorates the clear blue New Mexico sky. The crisp fall climate and beautiful desert landscape of Albuquerque create the perfect atmosphere—it's no wonder that the sight of over 500 balloons rising above the city is one of the world's most photographed events.

And though the view is always mesmerizing, Balloon Fiesta isn't just about watching the balloons launch. The public can get involved by taking a balloon ride or by volunteering with a chase crew, holding a rope, or helping to lift a gondola. Although if your preference is to just watch, the sky is filled with events such as mass ascensions, special shape balloon rodeos, flying competitions, a long-distance gas balloon race,



A birds-eye view of the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta. Photo: Cindy Petrehn

and evening fireworks. With 19 countries represented last year alone, this is the largest international event in North America and the largest ballooning event in the world! Don't miss your chance to experience this phenomenal fiesta.

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Feeling New in Old SANTA FE

Santa Fe may be the second oldest city in the U.S., but with its fresh setting, contemporary art scene, and distinctive gastronomic delights, it's the perfect place to escape for a reboot on life. Sitting at the base of the southern Rocky Mountains, Santa Fe is a huge outdoor playground of endless hiking, mountain biking, white-water rafting, rock climbing, camping, and fishing—waiting for any visitor or adventurous traveler who's ready to experience its pristine landscape and limitless activities.

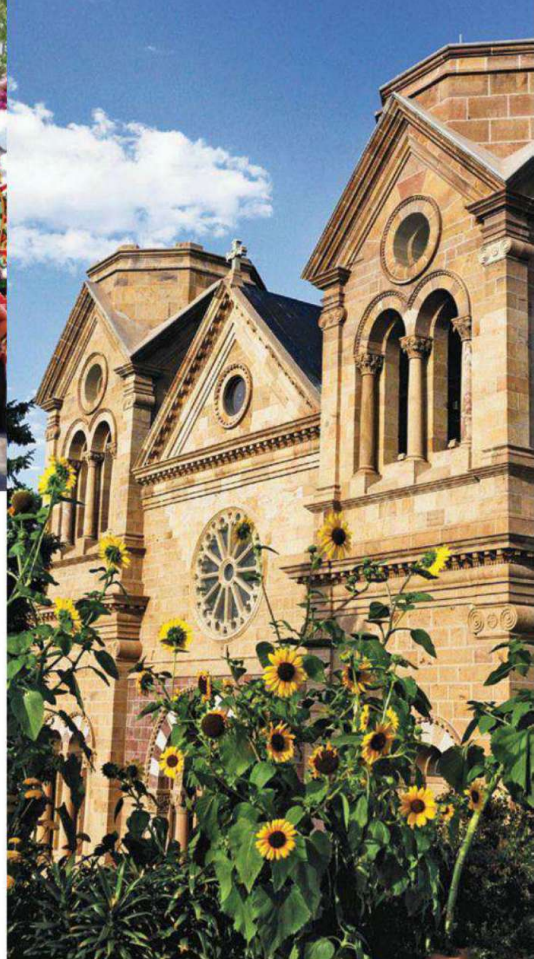
Within the city, a vibrant art market can be found. Unique stores and galleries create a perfect combination for intriguing shopping. Additionally, Santa Fe is a hot spot for performing arts, especially in the summer when the Santa Fe Opera, free Santa Fe Bandstand



SWAIA Santa Fe Indian Market

performances, and many different festivals add to the city's calendar of music, theater, and dance.

One Santa Fe delight that is served up in abundance is chili. It's the most important ingredient here and it's used in almost everything imaginable. With more than 215 restaurants, and the freshest of seasonal ingredients available throughout the year, fabulous food options can be found everywhere in the city. Go to santafe.org to plan your visit.



The St. Francis of Assisi Cathedral



photo: NM Tourism Department

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Sunset casts a rosy glow over Roseau, Dominica's capital.

A Caribbean Hideaway

OFF-THE-SHIP ADVENTURES IN UNSPOILED DOMINICA

By EVERETT POTTER

LYING BETWEEN Martinique and Guadeloupe, Dominica has long been in the forefront of ecotourism. Rain forest wraps around 4,000-foot slumbering volcanoes, and some of the healthiest coral reefs in the world sit offshore. Hikers and snorkelers love this Caribbean island that's a delightful throwback to gentler times, a place without megaresorts, nightlife, and mass tourism. The self-proclaimed "Nature Island" shifted between British and French occupation for two centuries, but 2013 marks the 35th anniversary of its independence.

RAMBLE IN ROSEAU Ships dock in the heart of Roseau, the pleasantly ramshackle capital, where the streets are lined with rickety wooden houses with balconies. The British colonial-style architecture is best glimpsed along King George V Street. "Those who have an appreciation of history will see Roseau as a treasure," says Daryl Phillip, a local historian and horticulturist. "Our

language and laws are British, but our customs are French." Visit the **Dominica Museum** with its hand-carved Carib canoes, historic island photographs, and weathered oil painting of Queen Victoria. Nearby is **Cartwheel Café**, where strong, homegrown coffee will keep you going. If there are fishermen in the Roseau River scooping up tiny *titiwi* fish, stop at **Olive's**, where the namesake owner fries up *titiwi accra*, a spicy fish cake. Or sit down at **Pearls** for callaloo soup, made with native greens, and a glass of local Kubuli beer. Pick up traditional baskets woven by indigenous Kalinago at the **Old Market Square**. (4 hours)

JUNGLE LAND Hiking on Dominica can be arduous, made harder by frequent bursts of rain. But the plant life, the waterfalls, the hot springs, and the daily rainbows make it more than worthwhile, as does the chance of spotting the native Sisserou parrot. Ken's Hinterland Adventure Tours offers a range of guided hikes, and the three-hour

trek through **Morne Trois Pitons National Park**, a UNESCO World Heritage site, to Middleham Falls packs in some of the best of Dominica. The waterfall drops 200 feet into a natural pool where the cool waters offer a refreshing swim before you hike back through the humid jungle. (4 hours)

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE Snorkeling on **Champagne Reef**, a 10-minute cab ride south of Roseau, presents an undersea panorama filled with exotic sealife. Champagne Reef Dive & Snorkel provides changing rooms, gear, and a guide for \$19 an hour. In water ranging from 3 to 70 feet deep, you may view giant barrel sponges, flying gurnards, and a steady stream of bubbles from geothermal vents that gave the reef its name. Head back to Roseau and then out to sea again. The waters around Dominica are the permanent home of female sperm whales and pilot whales. **Anchorage Hotel Whale Watch & Dive Center** offers 3½-hour tours for \$67. (6 hours) ■

Toasting the Greek Spirit

A SIP OF OUZO SWEETENS THE DAY

TASTING OF ANISE with subtle hints of cardamom and clove, the fiery national tippie of Greece known as ouzo is meant to be sipped *sigá* (slowly) with a bit of food and in the company of friends. While some drink ouzo straight up, most add a splash of water, turning it cloudy. Greeks traditionally toast a bridal couple or a newborn with ouzo. Many use it as a folk remedy, rubbing it into aching joints. But most commonly people sip ouzo, as one adage says, “to slow the pace and sweeten the day.” Like the drink, ouzo’s history is hazy. According to some, the product originated in the early 19th century in the silk-producing town of Tirnavos in northeastern Greece. There, fans of the spirit declared it smooth as “USO Massalias,” the name used for premium silk bound for market in Marseille. Others argue ouzo comes from the island of Lesbos, where its production is centered today. Travel Greece and you’ll find an *ouzeri* in nearly every community. In Piraeus, Athens’s port since classical times, one of the oldest ouzo bars is **To Steki tou Artemi**. Beneath walls cluttered with vintage ads, patrons drink ouzo while playing backgammon and arguing politics. In Plaka, an ancient neighborhood near the Acropolis, **Sholarhio** is a favorite of academics and artists. Some Greeks say, “Ouzo makes the spirit.” Linger over a glass on the ivy-covered terrace at Sholarhio, and you may agree. —ALEXIS MARIE ADAMS



Licorice-flavored ouzo pairs well with an assortment of mezedses, Greek appetizers.

DAVID MCCLAIN/AURORA PHOTOS



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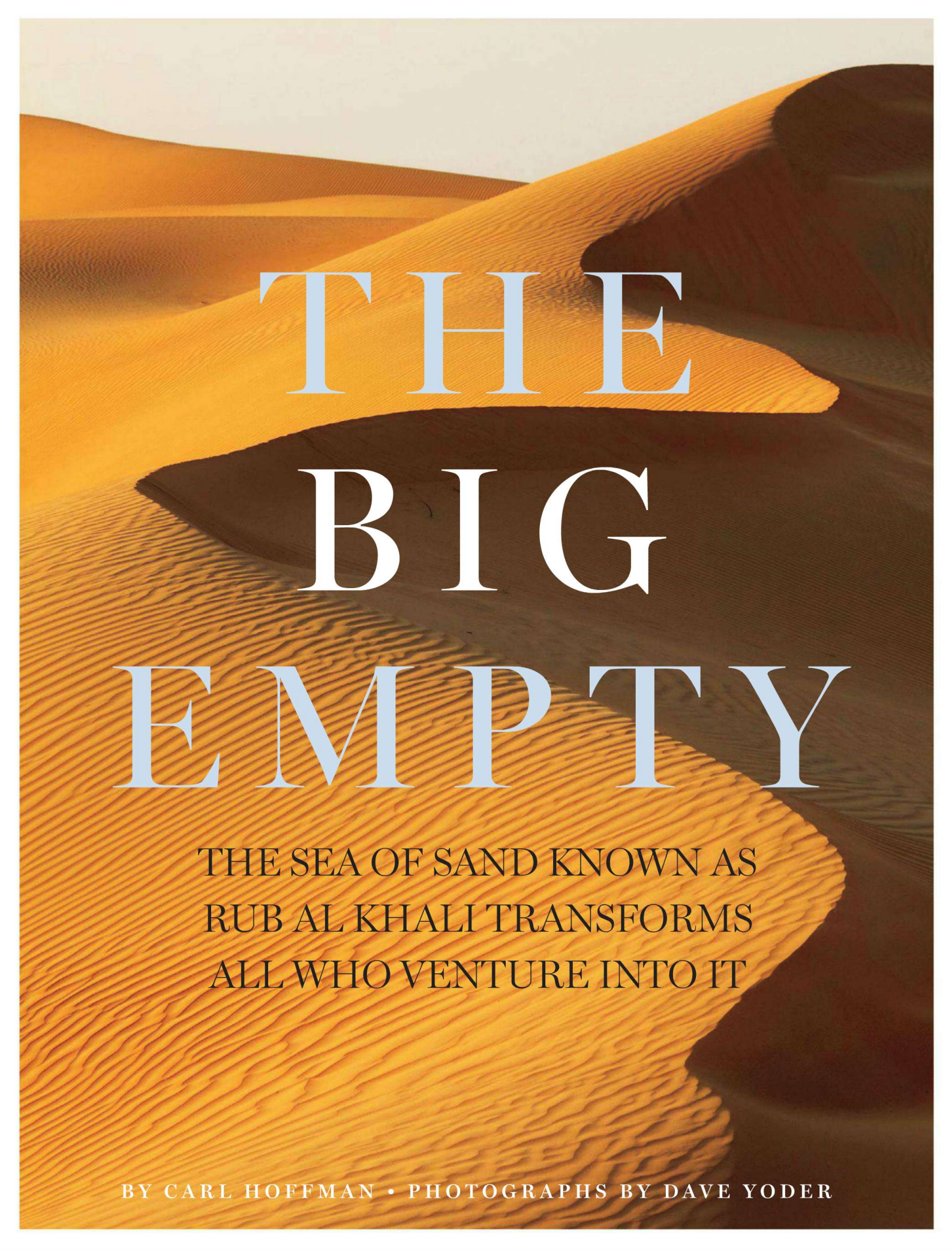
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*A Bedouin shares
a moment with
his camels in the
wind-swirled
desert of Abu Dhabi.*



THE BIG EMPTY

THE SEA OF SAND KNOWN AS
RUB AL KHALI TRANSFORMS
ALL WHO VENTURE INTO IT

BY CARL HOFFMAN • PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVE YODER

“

YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW MANY NIGHTS I REMEMBER,”

says Khamis Al Fendi, his voice gravelly, as if there is sand between his tonsils. The patriarch of the Al Mazrouei clan sits in a chair; the rest of us recline on carpets in an ocean of Arabian sand. The moon is big, bright, and almost full. His 160 camels stand hobbled nearby.

“Drink,” one of his sons says, handing me a stainless steel bowl he has filled with warm camel’s milk, foamy and thick. “It will make you strong!”

Al Fendi and his caravan are returning from three months of grazing the camels in Saudi Arabia; they’ve been traveling for 30 days. The night is balmy, windless. Twelve of us sit on three carpets under the stars, enjoying a feast of rice and freshly killed sheep, which we eat communally with our fingers off a platter big enough to hold, well, a whole sheep. Some of the men, clad in traditional white dishdashas and head coverings called *gitras*, smoke pipes. The earthy smell of camel dung lingers in the air.

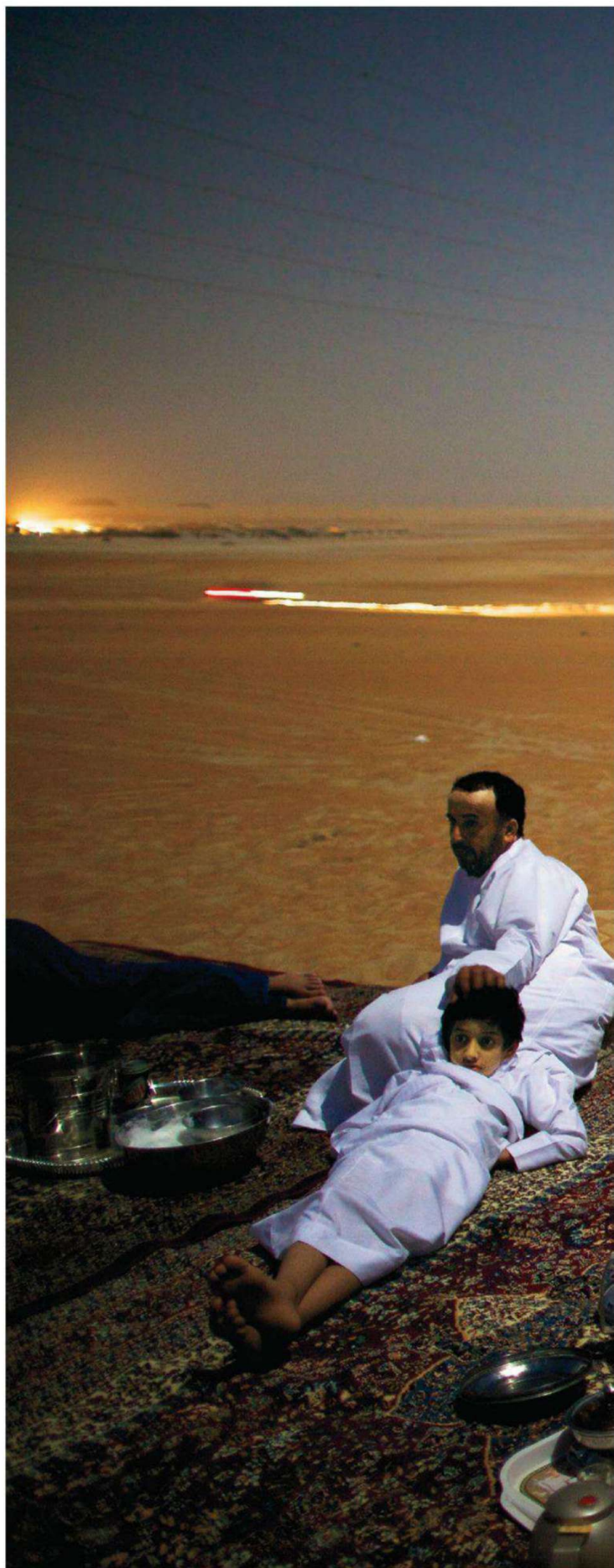
“You should come in winter,” one of the men says. “It’s cold and you need the fire.”

“In winter,” Al Fendi remembers, “we always were hungry and cold. Then the oil companies came.”

WHEN YOUR MIND IS JUST SO, certain words and images hit, and imagination is born. For me the words and images were of the Bedouin. Arabia. The Rub al Khali, or Empty Quarter. I had seen David Lean’s epic film *Lawrence of Arabia* as a child; that is where it must have begun. As a teenager I read *Arabian Sands*, Wilfred Thesiger’s tale of crossing the Empty Quarter in the 1940s. His stark words and black-and-white photographs seduced me with glimpses of Bedouin lives that seemed difficult, austere, and noble—the epitome of romance. Thesiger worried about keeping up physically with the Bedouin. Much more challenging, it would turn out, was their pure moral code, born from surviving in one of the harshest climates on Earth. “All that is best in the Arabs,” he wrote, “has come to them from the desert.”

Decades later, the closest I’d come to Arabia was urban Cairo. Where could one still find real Arabian Bedouin these days anyway, I wondered? The Arabian countries where oil had been found were rich, modern. Many Arab nations, including Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and Sudan, were experiencing political unrest. Then I heard about Abu Dhabi.

Largest of the seven emirates that make up the United Arab Emirates, this land about the size of West Virginia and bordering Saudi Arabia, Oman, and the strategic Persian Gulf makes much of its nomadic Bedouin heritage. That can be hard to square with the



Adhering to ancient ways, modern-day Bedouin relish an evening in their changing desert.





glass-and-steel canyons of the capital city, also named Abu Dhabi, where streets are filled with Indians in saris, Pakistanis in *kameez* tunics, and Filipinos in T-shirts and flip-flops. Or with places like the Marina Mall, a gleaming shopping plaza packed with dishdashalad Emiratis (as citizens of the United Arab Emirates are called) sipping caramel macchiatos from Starbucks and stocking up on 60-inch flat screens.

Abu Dhabi is unimaginably rich; it rests atop nearly ten percent of the world's known oil reserves. Building cranes dot the cloudless sky, Porsches and Escalades are everywhere, and a branch of Paris's Louvre Museum is rising on an island off Abu Dhabi city. The very idea of a nomadic Emirati living in a tent and tending to his camels out in the desert these days seems absurd.

Still, the official U.A.E. line reminds everyone of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan's directive to blend old and new, to preserve Bedouin culture even as the country continues to tap into its colossal wealth. (This has been in contrast to the other emirate that is flush with oil: Dubai, a city that makes Abu Dhabi seem almost pastoral.) However, what may come across as hagiographic public-relations talk is, in Abu Dhabi's case, true.

I look at Khamis Al Fendi, sitting under the stars barefoot while drinking raw camel's milk and eating with his fingers, and try to grasp that he's wealthier than I can fathom. His caravan includes a kitchen on wheels, a massive travel trailer, tankers for water and fuel, and numerous SUVs. Then there are his 160 black-colored camels—a breed originally from Saudi Arabia that is prized for its beauty—which are worth millions.

Indeed, at the emirate's 2010 camel beauty contest, the trading in camels rang up some \$400 million. Popular pastimes in Abu Dhabi include camel racing, camel breeding, and falconry. Bedu (Bedouin) such as Al Fendi spend weeks out in the desert in winter, playing in the dunes and tending their camel herds. Abu Dhabi may be increasingly educated, affluent, and cosmopolitan, but beneath lies a culture of the desert and the tent—and I want to find it.

A FRIEND OF A FRIEND connects me to Salem Al Mazrouei, director of operations and logistics for the Abu Dhabi Culture and Heritage Authority. He's in his thirties, bearded, once lived in the U.S., and speaks English with an American accent. I telephone him with the hope that he can help me find some real Bedouin.

"We are all Bedouin," he says. "As a child I lived in a tent. My father goes to his camel stable every day. I will take you."

It is late afternoon by the time Salem manages to escape from the office and we head into the western desert. The original plan was to go to his hometown of Madinat Zayid, a bastion of traditional culture, but he'd caught wind of Al Fendi coming in, so we blast into the desert in his 4x4. I don't know how he finds Al Fendi and his caravan: The dunes roll east, west, north, and south with little distinction.

When we arrive, I enter an older world. There are no women; as long as I'm with Salem and in the desert, the women are somewhere else. What there is plenty of is talk, wherever we go. It's how I learn that neither Salem's father nor his grandfather, both the heads of large companies, can read.

They were born in a different world. Until the 1950s, Abu Dhabi was essentially a small coastal village of pearlers and fishermen—and warring nomadic tribesmen in a searingly hot interior world, who wandered the deserts and oases eking out a living mostly from their camels. Sheikh Zayed slowly consolidated power, and then came the oil, lots of it. Salem's grandfather figured out a way to transport oil-drilling rigs without dismantling them, and soon he too was rich. Still, by 1976, when Salem was born, the village of Madinat Zayid had only a few houses. Growing up, Salem lived at

his grandparents' house during the hot summers and moved to a tent from September through April.

"Sheikh Zayed said, 'I don't want to bring the Bedouin to the city, but to bring culture to the Bedouin,'" he tells me.

We enjoy more coffee and tea and dates in the dunes, under a huge black sky lit by a bright moon. This is followed by dinner: meat surrounded by rice, with plastic packages of yogurt. We sit and eat, the meat tender and hot and fatty. Next, it's time to pray. The men kneel shoulder to shoulder, then press their foreheads to the still warm sand, giving thanks to a God who let them survive another day in the harsh environment. At that moment I see it, understand it: the deep bond between faith and landscape.

Another round of coffee, and it's time to turn in.

"Only drink a little," says Muhammad, one of Al Fendi's sons. "Otherwise no sleep. Night is for sleep. Camels sleep. Horses sleep. Even flowers sleep."

I SPEND THE NEXT NIGHT in the four-star Tilal Liwa resort hotel, smack in the middle of the desert, overlooking dunes that roll to the horizon. At dawn I make my way to Madinat Zayid's camel racetrack. It's Friday and the paddocks are crowded with hundreds of sleek, tan camels in racing bridles. Each is mounted with a two-foot-high, remote-controlled robot jockey brandishing a riding crop.

This race is nothing like horse racing. There is no grandstand, betting and booze are prohibited, and the oval track is long—nine miles long. In fact, it's hard to tell what's going on; I need to find an English speaker. Persistence pays off. A man named Khamis, wearing designer shades and a thick beard, beckons me to follow him. Camels, he explains, race in age groups. They'll line up behind a net at the start, held by human handlers who wear protective vests and helmets. When the net rises, the handlers let go and the camels take off, all surging necks and stampeding hooves.

Race camels traditionally had been ridden by children from poor countries, but child jockeys were banned in the U.A.E. in 2002 and replaced by diminutive mechanical jockeys. We scramble for Khamis's pickup truck, leap in, and blast off with other spectators in a cloud of dust. A flowing cacophony of horns and shouts races after the galloping camels.

Khamis whistles into one walkie-talkie, which signals his camel's robot jockey to whip the animal on, and barks, "*Hut, hut, hut!*" into a second one.

"Bedu crazy!" he yells to me, laughing deeply as cars swerve and camels run in the free-for-all. "Good camel!" he shouts. "Fast! Fast! Fast! *Yella yella yella!*"

The event has the feel of a tractor pull in the U.S., men playing and having fun with tools essential to their lives. But midway, his camel flags and drops back. Khamis turns quiet.

By 9:30 a.m., as the sun begins to burn, the racing winds down. Long lines of camels and their handlers lope back toward stables scattered across the desert. Khamis's stable is typical: His family has several hundred camels kept in various pens arranged around a concrete house with a *majlis*—an open living area with a central coffee table laid with cups, dates, and other fruit and surrounded by floor cushions. We sit, drink tea and coffee, talk. Men come and go in this older form of connectivity that makes Facebook and e-mail seem as ethereal as smoke. And we eat—huge meals of fish and camel and rice and yogurt. Three German tourists join us; Khamis saw them taking photos on the side of the road and invited them back to the stables. Suddenly they're as much family as I.

"People call us rigid-minded," says Musallam Al Ameri, who looks younger than his 32 years and speaks perfect English after four years at an American university. "But we're nomads. We maintain certain principles and values that cannot be broken. Integrity.

By sand and by sea: Camel races piloted by robot jockeys lure crowds to Abu Dhabi's desert (opposite, top). Recreational water sports (opposite, bottom) have gained popularity around the expanding capital city of Abu Dhabi, which fronts the Persian Gulf.





*Abu Dhabi's
Sheikh Zayed
Mosque is one
of the largest
in the world.*

Honesty. Hospitality. Visiting our relations, our neighbors, our elders is important. Our religion commands it."

For fifth grade he moved to town to attend school.

"We waited for the weekend to return to the desert. We love camels. A nomad and his camel have a very tight connection. It is the highest level of appreciation and love."

Bedouin also love falconry. Food traditionally was scarce for desert nomads and protein in their diet important, so the Bedouin found the ultimate hunting machine. Hunting no longer is permitted in Abu Dhabi itself, to preserve its fauna, but falconry remains a passion. Nearly every Emirati with a camel stable also has birds. In late afternoon, Salem hands me over to Mubarak Al Mazrouei, who is taking two of his five saker falcons out for evening training. They're big and beautiful, with enormous talons and pouffy chests. Their eyes are covered by a leather hood, their legs tied loosely to wooden stands. When unleashed they are wildness defined, pure predator, and together they're worth \$50,000.

We load them into the car—they perch on the backseat—and drive into the desert. The sun is low, the day's heat ebbing. We stop on a plateau. The horizon is endless, with the sun setting on one side as the moon rises on the other.

"I fly them every morning and evening," Al Mazrouei says to me as he fits the birds with tiny antennas. He takes the hood off one, unties its leash, and off it soars.

The saker falcon is one of the fastest birds of prey on the planet. Al Mazrouei whirls a lure overhead. I watch as the bird races in, dives down—and Al Mazrouei snatches the lure away.

"It's to teach him to come back if he misses," he says.

Then things become more serious: Al Mazrouei takes a live pigeon, plucks its wings a little, and releases it in the falling light. Despite its missing feathers, the pigeon is a fast, darting flier. It rises high and heads away, a dark speck. But the falcon knows its business. It's the F-22 fighter jet of the bird world, and is gone in a flash. Now both birds wheel and circle—and the falcon strikes from the rear. The deed is done.

The raptor stands atop its kill, eyes as big as black marbles. It bites and feeds.

"Shh, shh," whispers Al Mazrouei, reflecting centuries of man and bird together in the desert. He takes a sip of water and spits it gently into the falcon's beak, cleaning the blood. The moon rises.

"I have had him one month now, and he is almost ready. When he does his first real hunt I will gift him a name."

YOU CANNOT UNDERSTAND ABU DHABI without going out to the oasis of Al Ain, in the eastern desert hard against the border with Oman. So I go.

Al Ain is Abu Dhabi's second largest city, but step past the mud walls of its Sultan and al Jahili forts, and the modern town falls away. It was here that Sheikh Zayed began to consolidate his power over disparate warring tribes by improving the area's irrigation systems, which increased local agricultural production. I spend hours around the forts, admiring old cannons and a spiked door in Sultan, then gazing at al Jahili's collection of black-and-white photos taken by Thesiger.

The forts today appear simple, yet they're remarkable. Al Jahili looks like a giant sand castle with its crenellated round towers. The

walls are thick, the small rooms cool. In a world where there was so little beyond dunes and tents, the forts must have seemed like small cities. I let my mind wander, imagining camels and riders coming and going, smoke rising from cooking fires, Sheikh Zayed heading out for a month of hunting in the nearby mountains. Then I make my way to the oasis, where plots of green date palms are cut with irrigation canals, providing essential shelter and sustenance in a desert land. I wander among the palms, jealous of Thesiger for seeing it before modernization, thankful that I'm seeing it now.

I END UP SPENDING A FEW NIGHTS in Abu Dhabi city, a different world but one I like, too. Backstreets are crowded with people from around the world. Mosque muezzins call the faithful to prayer as six-table Indian masala joints dish out meals for a dollar. At the wharf on the Persian Gulf before dawn, hundreds of wooden dhows disgorge their catches into neat piles of silvery fish, and an auctioneer passes down the rows fielding bids in singsong Arabic. A boat crew from Gujarat, India, waves me over and invites me to join them for rice with black pickled mango, curried crab, and

a few shots of Scotch. Some moments I'm not sure where I really am because it is all so international, and I think: This is the future—a mix of everyone in a certain place that is not really anywhere.

But in Abu Dhabi it's the desert that calls. I grab fruit, snacks, bottles of water, and a cheap sleeping bag at the nearest department store and drive out to Tal Mireb, which, I've heard, is the tallest dune reachable by road. Tal Mireb rises along a string of oases that Wilfred Thesiger was the first Westerner to chronicle. I don't want to merely see the Empty Quarter—I want to sleep in it, experience it, to understand what Thesiger meant when he lingered on its

edge in 1947 and wrote this line: "It was very still, with the silence which we have driven from our world."

Two hours out of the city, the dunes are huge, rolling monsters, tidal waves of orange and yellow under watercolor blue. It's nearly twilight when I find Tal Mireb. I deflate the tires and shift into four-wheel drive, lurching and spinning onto the dune, up, up, up, and over. I settle the vehicle into a level nook of sand from which I can see no road and get out to continue climbing on foot as high as I can.

The sun is an orange ball dipping behind the dunes. And there is silence. A silence so deep, the sound of my pen scratching on my notepad has never seemed so loud. The slightest of breezes blows, and it feels as if the whole world is alive, quietly, here. This surely is one of the most beautiful places I've ever seen, this unending sand of the Empty Quarter. I think of how everyone should see it, along with the unending ice of the Arctic and the unending blue of the deep ocean.

I lie on the warm sand as still as I can be. There is no movement but the stars. They fall, tiny fragile lights gone so quickly that I wonder if I even saw them. I want to write about them. But the Empty Quarter is so empty that it is full, and the sound of my pen is much too loud.

Contributing editor **CARL HOFFMAN** has written two books, including *The Lunatic Express: Discovering the World Via Its Most Dangerous Buses, Boats, Trains, and Planes*. Contributing photographer **DAVE YODER** also has shot for National Geographic and Smithsonian.

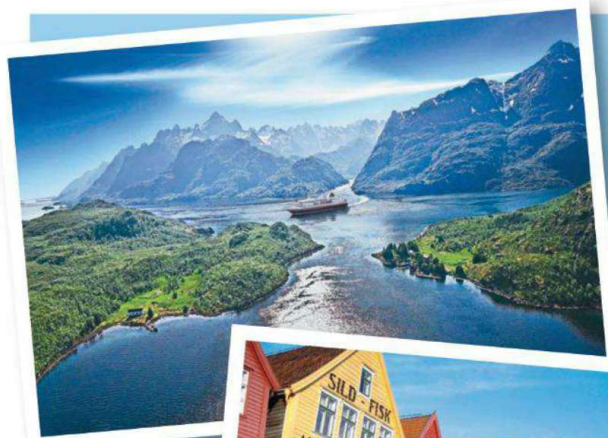




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Lofoten islands
(above);
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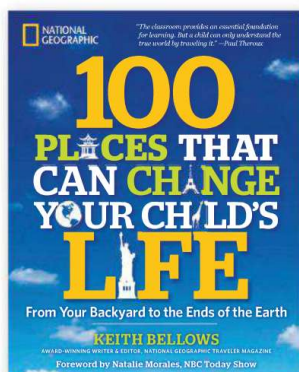
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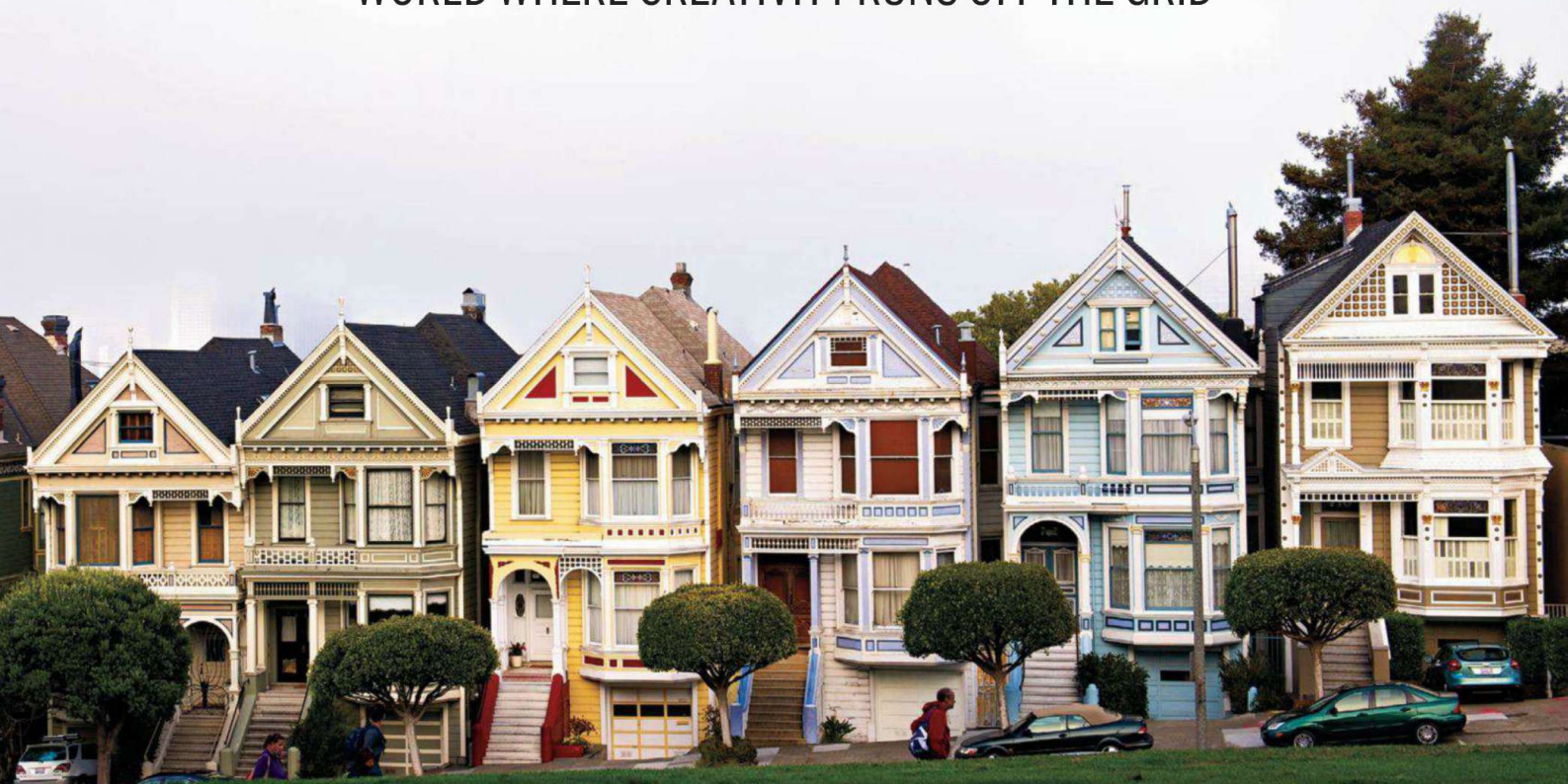
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The Social Network

WIRED AND INSPIRED, SAN FRANCISCO IS A KINETIC
WORLD WHERE CREATIVITY RUNS OFF THE GRID



by ANDREW NELSON photographs by KRISTA ROSSOW

A man with a mustache and glasses is the central figure. He wears a blue cap with a red and white checkered band, sunglasses on top, and a red, white, and blue plaid scarf. He is dressed in a purple and black plaid shirt over a grey t-shirt. He holds a white bowl of food with a wooden spoon. The background shows a crowded outdoor event with other people and buildings.

*Acrobat, yoga teacher,
and chocolatier
Daniel Scott digs into
a food truck feast.
Opposite: The iconic
“Painted Ladies”
show their Victorian
colors on the fringes of
Alamo Square Park.*

Hello

dampness, my old friend. The familiar cold compress of a Bay Area morning makes me shiver as I pad out of my bedroom to admire my suite with its sleek white couch, gleaming hardwood, and vivid artwork.

Beyond, the big window frames pretty Victorian houses marching up a hill. I push open the door to the bathroom—all frosted glass and steel lines—to discover the requisite designer bath soap. It's the best boutique hotel I've ever stayed in, but it's no hotel at all. I'm showering in a house belonging to people who were complete

strangers to me 11 hours ago. Moreover, they've left for the weekend, entrusting their home and all in it to someone they just met.

Welcome to what I call "Share Francisco," where a mix of digital connectivity, social ambition, and bubbling optimism has this city by the bay humming anew. It's glossier and richer and tastier than ever—the exotic capital of the \$4 cuppa joe with notes of lemon curd at Ritual Coffee and cantaloupe-cayenne ice cream at Humphry Slocombe. Its smells—night jasmine, Szechuan beef, medical marijuana—are as diverse as its streetcars, dinging their way from the Castro's rainbow flags to the sea lions at Fisherman's Wharf. With the last decade's dot-com bust a distant memory, San Francisco is start-ups and yoga pants, "Painted Lady" houses and panhandlers, programmers and poets, transvestites and tourists, plus the rudest bicyclists on the planet. Inspiring and twee, smug and seismically challenged, it is bawdy, beguiling, and beautiful. In short, the city is sensational. Or as one newcomer confided to me: "Every day in San Francisco feels like a first kiss."

Pucker up, travelers. Technology is redefining a visit to America's favorite city and my old hometown. Roving chefs use Facebook to alert diners to where they will pop up next. Locals tap iPhone apps like SF Climates to ascertain the weather from any of the city's famously varied microclimates (there's often a 20-degree temperature spread between them). They check into Waze to duck traffic jams on the Bay Bridge and search Twitter to find out what food trucks are rolling to Fort Mason for Friday night Off the Grid dinners. And they offer their rooms online with Airbnb, a start-up based here that connects guests with amateur innkeepers.

"Social media has woven itself into the very fabric of this town," says my host, Brad Olcott, 41. "It's not just about making money in this new share economy; we want to meet people and show them what makes San Francisco so unique." By listing their space on Airbnb, the Web designer and his wife, Julie, 36, and son, Rye, 3, have opened their home to me using the power of the online platform. I pay them \$150 a night. In return, they're giving me more than any concierge could: a local's-eye view of their shining city on a hill.

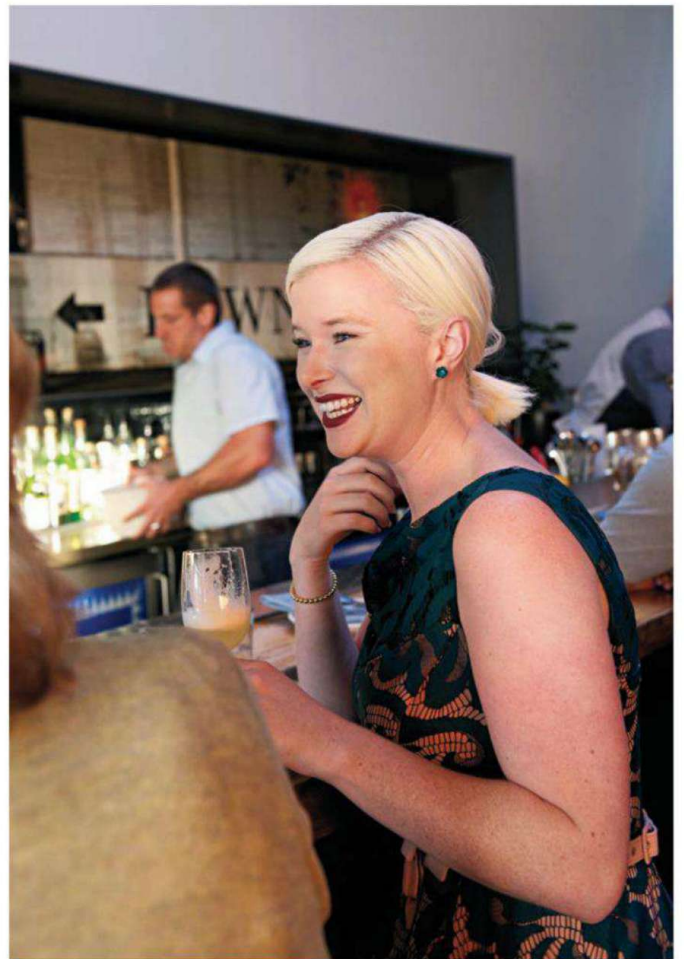
I'm nervous ringing the doorbell, but Julie's welcoming smile melts any fears. I learn she's an artist, commissioned to design the terrazzo floors for the rising TransBay Terminal, the city's futuristic Grand Central Station. Dinner consists of a thin-crust pizza from Delfina's, a bottle of rosé, and the inside scoop on good restaurants: Tacolicious for Mexican, Locanda for Italian, and Tartine, a French-style patisserie that inspires almost religious devotion.

The next morning the Olcott family is up early to fly to an East Coast wedding, leaving me to reacquire myself with the city. Acting on a tip from Brad, I download SideCar, a new ride-sharing app rolling out in San Francisco that links passengers with ordinary drivers interested in making a few bucks in their off-hours as citizen chauffeurs. The negotiated fare, or "donation" as the company calls it, is paid by phone. SideCar's easy interface and its cost (usually less than a taxi) have made it my go-to app. "You need a ride, and I need the money," says Akasha Mutkhar, the African-born driver who picks me up in his Toyota van the first time I use the service. "It's a community. We're both doing this together."

The backseat views are still the same: the grand Chinatown Gate, Nob and Russian Hills, the Embarcadero's Canary Island date palms. The Ferry Building's clock tower (modeled after one in Seville, Spain) still speeds the stride of commuters hurrying to catch their ferries to Sausalito and Larkspur. Inside, Acme Bread will sell you loaves of crusty sourdough, while McEvoy Ranch sells the small-batch olive oil to dip it in. Farther up Market Street, the wood-fired "chicken for two" still draws folks to Zuni Café, a classic San Francisco restaurant. But there's a new pace. The city now counts 44,000 tech jobs. Digital synapses crackle in rising neighborhoods like Dogpatch and SoMa and energize the shoppers in Hayes Valley—the neighborhood Twitterista Marcia Gagliardi, editor of popular restaurant newsletter *Tablehopper*, calls "the hipster family's Fifth Avenue." All the action collides in the Mission District.

In a town of inclines and perpetual chill, the Mission is hot and flat—filled with rows of two- and three-story wooden Victorians that came through the great fire and earthquake of 1906 relatively

Clockwise from top left: Rye Olcott and his parents, Julie and Brad, welcome Airbnb guests into their Noe Valley home. The Devoto Gardens flower stand blossoms every Saturday at the Ferry Plaza Farmers Market. Bar Agricole is a mixology haven in an industrial block of the SoMa district. The San Francisco Ferry Building bustles as a marketplace.





unscathed (though the Northern Mission was flattened). Then it was a haven for the German and Irish families. Today it is a global mash-up. A skinny skateboarder with tattooed arms deftly swerves around a middle-aged Latina hawking phone cards to Mexican construction workers and avoids a walking-while-texting businessman. Even the restaurants advertise a jumbled patrimony, to judge by their names: Craftsman & Wolves (a bakery café) or Hog & Rocks (a ham and oyster bar).

I'm intrigued by the Mission's evolution and pull up Airbnb for a stay in this still scruffy but irrepressible community. There's a listing from a guy named Wyatt at \$100 a night with vacancy for later in the week. I book it.

THE FUTURE MAY COME SOONER to San Francisco than anywhere else, but the city's rich past is what draws the tourists. For me, too, I think, booking a stay at one of San Francisco's newest hotels, the Inn at the Presidio. My SideCar driver pulls through the gates of the 1,490-acre former Army base, and I see that the view of the Golden Gate Bridge from the brick-and-wood houses sheltered by Monterey pine and eucalyptus is unchanged despite the Presidio's new designation as part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The 22-room hotel opened just last year in what once was the unmarried officers' barracks. Built in 1903, the Inn is one of the handsomest of the 433 historic structures here that include the Walt Disney Family Museum and a commanding fountain statue of Yoda channeling the Force in front of LucasArts.

Much of Lombard Street (opposite) is straight, but its crooked segment and Coit Tower are iconic stops in North Beach. Ashley Roussel plays piano in the Mission District's Viracocha shop (below), which sells vintage goods—typewriters, togs, and other crafty treasures from a bygone era.

There's a crackling fire in my suite's hearth. As I prepare for the evening, I can hear the wail of foghorns rolling across the water. Old-school San Francisco. How is it faring in this Google-ized new world? To find out, I'm dining tonight with one of its avatars. Barnaby Conrad III epitomizes the city's unhurried, courtly charm. His father, Barnaby Conrad, Jr., was a best-selling '50s novelist, who operated El Matador, his famous Barbary Coast saloon patronized by the likes of William Saroyan, Robert Mitchum, and Marilyn Monroe.

I'm meeting Barnaby 3.0 in Pacific Heights at Florio, an elegant bistro celebrated for its hanger steak and sangfroid. Upper Fillmore Street is bustling when I arrive. Thin blond women in black quilted jackets carry shopping bags marked with the names of boutiques: Kiehls, Nest, Margaret O'Leary. Their men sport blue blazers. The silver bars across their loafers gleam in the setting sun. We don't have a reservation, but that doesn't appear to matter when you're with Barnaby. Ordering a negroni, he stops to chat briefly with Hollywood director and writer Philip Kaufman (*Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *The Right Stuff*, *Hemingway & Gellhorn*) and greet other friends. It's a scene those glamorous, if

The city is sensational. Or as one newcomer confided to me:
“Every day in San Francisco feels like a first kiss.”





fictitious, local detectives Nick and Nora Charles of the 1930s would recognize—right down to the martini coupes. Things have changed in San Francisco. But, clearly, not much.

“I was born here in 1952,” Barnaby said. “And I’ve seen it evolve, but this city has always done the same thing: It’s made things. We had shoemakers, printers, and shipwrights then, and in North Beach they still make pasta, cocktails, and romance. Now, in SoMa, they are crafting social media. Whatever it’s called, it’s making things. That’s our cultural franchise.”

Making and remaking them. Over the past few years the city has opened new attractions like the Disney and the Contemporary Jewish Museum, located in the Yerba Buena district, and expanded others, from the Asian Art Museum to SFMOMA (the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art). To experience the cultural revival, I venture to Golden Gate Park to the California Academy of Sciences and the de Young Museum, San Francisco’s striking fine arts center. Built in the early 20th century, the institutions once faced each other across a fountain like two aging preppies sipping gimlets at the Palace Hotel bar. I emerge from the complex’s basement parking lot and discover that the two duffers have been transformed beyond all recognition.

Gone is the old-money rectitude. The two august buildings have been transformed into theater. The de Young, torn down and reimagined

Brunch at Outerlands, a restaurant in the Outer Sunset neighborhood, promises a sweet Dutch pancake topped with ricotta and strawberries (above). In the Mission District, in front of the Fabric8 gallery, a “parklet” (right) offers a prominent platform for artwork. Opposite: From Horseshoe Bay, the Golden Gate Bridge rises above the fog as twilight falls.

in 2005, resembles an aircraft carrier designed by Darth Vader, all metal cladding with a coppery, twisting tower piercing the tree canopy nine stories up in the air. The academy has become the forest itself—sporting an undulating green roof covered in grasses and plants that look like a Hobbit refuge.

“I’m sorry, but due to demand we can’t accommodate any more people in our earthquake exhibit.” The ticket taker is polite but firm. I head over to the de Young and decide to hit the observation tower first. It’s a spectacular 360-degree view on a par with that from Coit Tower. From here the city radiates from the park’s emerald heart: the jumble of Victorians in the Haight and the Panhandle punctuated by the domes of St. Ignatius, the University of San Francisco’s great Jesuit baroque church, and the neo-Byzantine dome of the Temple Emanu-El. To the west, the tidy pastel boxes of the Richmond and the Sunset dissolve into a watery gray cloud. The marine layer is pushing in from the Pacific Ocean, crossing the Great Highway and into the parts of those neighborhoods known locally as the Outer Avenues. “I love watching the fog up here move in from the Pacific,” a docent says with a sigh. “It’s never the same fog twice.”

TO MOST VISITORS, THIS GRID of compact homes that meets the Pacific at Ocean Beach remains undiscovered. This neighborhood of surfers, families, and strivers from Manchuria to Madrid is San Francisco without the glitz. A place of Irish bars, surfer dives, Orthodox synagogues, indie bookstores, and menus from every province, republic, and kingdom in Asia.

I stop in at Outerlands, a rootsy restaurant dishing up comfort food like Dutch pancakes and “eggs in jail,” a popular brunch dish. The Pacific, just a few blocks away, makes itself felt. A gorgeous Russian-speaking woman keeps her fur-lined hoodie snug as she pulls the crust from her grilled cheese, while members of a bike club, warm under an outside heater, watch a Latino construction crew mold concrete forms for yet another San Francisco “parklet”—one







Tech workers don't think it unusual that the Web they're so busy weaving has brought me to the table. Their technology turns travelers into party guests and party guests into friends.

of the city's newest trends. These reclaimed parking spots, equipped with seating, extend the sidewalk for the footsore, doodlers, and dreamers. Since 2010 the city has built some two dozen parklets with many more under consideration. It's a welcome change.

Change is also what's coming to one of San Francisco's most notorious spots—a part of the Tenderloin called Mid-Market, a stretch of Market Street in the shadow of City Hall's black and gold dome. It's known for homeless people and drug dealers, but now, also, a new hope as a wave of tech companies crests here. Last June Twitter began moving the first of 900 employees into its new headquarters in the old art deco furniture Mart at Market and Ninth. How sociable is a social media company? I decide to drop in and see.

"Hi, I'm @AndrewNelson," I introduce myself to the security guard stationed beneath a 1930s-style mural. "I want to visit Twitter. May I go up?" The security guard shakes her head. No. "I have more than 2,000 followers," I add. "That's got to count for something." Silence. "I can't go up?" She shakes her head again. "Tweet somebody," she says.

#NiceTry.

IF MID-MARKET IS JUST BEGINNING TO BUD, the Mission is already blooming. I meet my Airbnb hosts for the next two nights: Wyatt Starosta, his girlfriend, Kendra Shimmell, and their dog, Bumba. They inhabit a live-work loft on Florida Street. My digs aren't as glamorous as at the Olcott home—I get an air mattress—but it's cozy and private. After I unpack, Wyatt asks if I would like to join him on his daily walk with Bumba.

They lead me through the Mission's streets, and I take a series of mental Instagrams: A riot of colorful murals and a rack of Mexican wrestler masks remind me of the neighborhood's Latin heritage (though gentrification has caused a 22 percent drop in its Hispanic population). Hummingbirds dart around plantings of pink geraniums and purple Mexican sage, while open doors and curtains frame fashionable couples picking at small plates at Flour + Water, a hot new Italian restaurant, and a pair of swordsmen sparring like musketeers at a fencing club. Passing a loading dock, I catch a sweet whiff

of bread and see a baker stacking fragrant whole-wheat loaves to cool on racks. We return to discover that Kendra has accepted an invitation to a dinner party in my name. "Come with," she says. "It's up on Potrero Hill, the 'hood with good views."

She's right. The flat on Carolina Street offers the guests dizzying vistas in all directions. Joshua Vincent, our host, is a "user experience" designer—a metaphysical-sounding term but an important job to makers of tech ranging from video games to mobile phones. To a person, his other guests are all doing similar things. As the city's lights wink on below, the guests dine on organic chicken and grilled vegetables. The talk is of gaming apps and lovers, novels and venture capital. No one thinks it unusual that the Web they're so busy weaving has brought me to the table. Their technology turns travelers into party guests and party guests into friends.

With the conversation at a pleasant buzz, I watch the fog spilling over Twin Peaks. I'm grateful to be allowed this insider perspective, but, I think, the true party is San Francisco itself. And everyone's invited. The Net may have speeded things up, but this shining city has been Share Francisco at least since the forty-niners arrived for the first flash in the pan and then stayed to build here. Today's gold rush is no different. It's about faces, not Facebook. It's rubbing shoulders, not sliding fingers across your smartphone, that makes this city seductive. Stop "Liking," I think, and look up from your devices and start meeting.

"More wine?" someone asks. "Sure," I reply, feeling the familiar cool night air tickle my skin. I raise my glass to the glittering streets below. "Here's to old friends. And new ones."

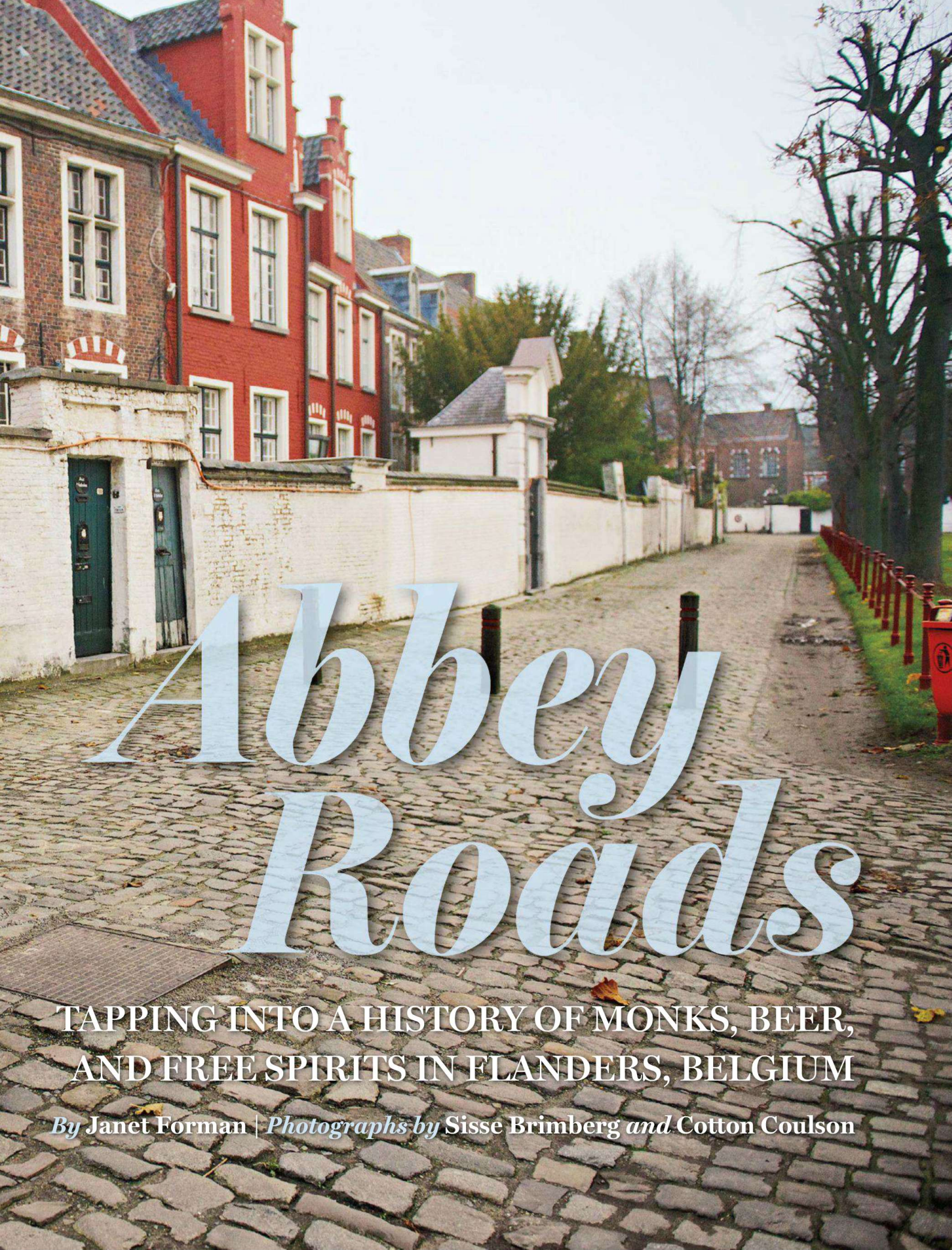
ANDREW NELSON, a contributing editor, lived for years in San Francisco before becoming a communications professor in New Orleans. Traveler photo editor and native West Coaster KRISTA ROSSOW feels at home in a land of coffee, microclimates, and quirks.

Beneath a "living roof," the California Academy of Sciences (top left) houses a rain forest, aquarium, planetarium, earthquake exhibit, and other wild curiosities. A conference room at Airbnb's headquarters (left) is designed to resemble a rental apartment the company represents.





*A bicyclist negotiates
cobblestones past
Gent's Small Beguinage,
a haven for women
that dates to the
13th century.*

A photograph of a cobblestone street in Belgium. On the left, there are red brick buildings with white window frames and a white wall with two green doors. On the right, there are bare trees and a red fence. The title 'Abbey Roads' is written in a large, light blue, serif font across the middle of the image.

Abbey Roads

TAPPING INTO A HISTORY OF MONKS, BEER,
AND FREE SPIRITS IN FLANDERS, BELGIUM

By Janet Forman | Photographs by Sisse Brimberg and Cotton Coulson

Turning down the winding monastery road near Westmalle in Flanders, Belgium's Flemish-speaking north, I suddenly doubt my desire to sleep among Trappist monks, the largely silent Catholic order founded more than three centuries ago. A knock on the hulking wooden door brings two eyes to the viewing grille:

"Retreat?" barks the voice. "I don't know anything about it. The brothers are in church."

My friend Wendy Littlefield and I had long promised ourselves a quiet interlude here at Westmalle Abbey, since a decade ago when Wendy—a Chicago beer importer and the first American woman inducted into the 500-year-old Belgian brewers' guild—had brought me to the monastery's brewery next door. Peeking through the abbey gates then, we had envied those monks biking across the bucolic grounds with time to ponder life's eternal questions.

"Everybody who considers peace and quiet as beneficial is welcome," notes the Westmalle website of its guest policy, but the stern voice on the other side of the door has jolted us from our midlife fantasy. Will two females be an intrusion on an all-male, celibate domain? Can extended silence, like a brain deprived of REM sleep, conjure demons, as I'd once been warned? Do the monks know we're not Catholic? And just why are these men following a medieval lifestyle—six prayer vigils a day starting at 4 a.m.—less than an hour from the Brussels airport?

"Didn't we pass a nice inn down the road?" I whisper to Wendy.

A FEW DAYS EARLIER Wendy and I had begun our journey taking a 10-minute trip on the "Devil's Train," so dubbed by locals for its unholy speed, from Brussels Airport to Mechelen. To avoid a case of the spiritual bends before our monastery stay, we had decided to first road-trip to the region's historic beguinages—districts (often walled) resembling convents where unmarried women (beguines) lived together, no vows of chastity or poverty required.

With so many men off fighting the Crusades, in the 13th century the surplus of single ladies formed these self-governed towns within towns humming with bakeries, breweries, and churches. Many are now recognized as UNESCO World Heritage sites.

Upon arrival in Mechelen, we learn that the beguines were not particularly popular. "People thought: Who are these women who refuse to take vows?" explains Leona de Graef, the wonderfully

irreverent guide we've hired to shed some historical perspective on these narrow streets. "Many of them were rich girls," she says—educated, worldly, and maybe a bit spoiled. The women were labeled heretics and conveniently exiled outside city walls. "Problem solved," de Graef declares. "Bye-bye, beguines." As she talks, I can't help but think about Wendy. Determined to attend Yale in the 1970s, when few women had studied there, she kept knocking on the university's door until she was accepted.

In the morning drizzle, houses on the beguinage's spindly lanes seem to huddle for protection. Peering through the windows reveals a taste for relative luxury—hefty beams, decorative staircases, even ledges atop ornate keyholes (perhaps to guide hands unsteadied by drink?). Wendy spots Het Anker, a brewery founded by the women of Mechelen's beguinage in 1471. Before we can justify a malty Gouden Carolus, though, we've planned what appears to be a simple driving loop to the nearby beguinages of Lier and Leuven.

We're high on female empowerment from our tour, but that doesn't help us with our next task: cracking the code of the Flemish-speaking GPS in our rental car. Inexplicably, the device seems intent on pointing us toward Brussels—the wrong way—so we hastily punch in *korte* (short). That sends us down what can only be described as a cow path. Finally, after 90 ego-bruising minutes of shuffling paper maps, we spot Lier's multifaced Zimmertoren clock tower and arrive at the entrance to its beguinage.

As we stand alone at the baroque entry gate, it's as if only the two of us—and UNESCO—know about this walled city that celebrated its 800th birthday in 2012. Uneven cobblestones slow us to a feudal pace past dwellings that appear built for elves. Elves who bake pastries, we hope? Our stomachs growling, we hightail it to a tea shop, Brood-Banket de Vocht, to try the cinnamon-spiced Lierse *vlaai*, a pucklike bread tart with a centuries-old recipe. On the way, a quirky metal sculpture of sheep is a nod to an old tale of how, in the Middle Ages, Lier's townspeople were offered the choice of hosting a livestock market or building

Clockwise from top left: a cappuccino with a foam dragon at Gent's Café Labath; a guest sanctuary at Martin's Patershof hotel in Mechelen; vegetarian dining at Restaurant Avalon in Gent; a horse and buggy in Brugge.





South of Antwerp, Mechelen is sometimes called Dijlestad ("city on the Dijle") due to its river core.



On a side street in the city center, 't Brugs Beertje—"the little bear of Brugge"—serves 350-plus Belgian beers.

a university—and decided sheep seemed a safer bet than rollicking students. Scholarship thus became the calling card of the nearby town of Leuven, our next stop, along the riverbanks of the Dijle. Students rush and scooters buzz in the city center by the Great Beguinage, with its tiny windows and high courtyard walls. We get the point—the beguines liked their privacy—and move on, back to Mechelen where the beer menu at Het Anker is calling our names.

THE NEXT MORNING IN MECHELEN, a heart-thumping blaze of yellow, blue, and red awakens me. Much to my relief it's not the radiant gates of heaven but sunlight filtering through the stained-glass windows in my room under the church steeple at Martin's Patershof hotel. Following an evening spent assiduously "researching" beer, my eyes are bleary but my resolve is clear: If beguines could achieve a measure of independence amid the medieval patriarchy, we can surely best our GPS. We type in towns along our route, and, happily, the N17 delivers us to the bohemian town of Gent without tears.

After ogling graffiti art and vintage naughty postcards at a shop called the Fallen Angels, we find one of Gent's three beguinages, the Old St. Elisabeth, or the Holy Corner, tucked away in a forgotten square. Not too far away in the town center at the Small Beguinage, aka Our Lady ter Hoyen, I'm happy to see the women who lived there get some respect: A plaque proclaims the movement "mystical" and their enclaves "cities of peace." Finally, we find the 19th-century

Great Beguinage in the immigrant neighborhood St. Amandsberg, where afternoon light casts long shadows on Gothic Revival facades.

Again in the car, our GPS work-around does the trick until Brugge, its entire city center a UNESCO World Heritage site and, it turns out, a confusing maze of one-way streets. So we ditch the car and follow our noses to the Beguinage Ten Wijngaerde, "the vineyard," now home to a Benedictine convent at the edge of town, across a bridge-laced canal nearly clogged by flotillas of swans. Inside the gates, a tiny museum offers a glimpse into everyday beguine life, including the elaborate Valenciennes lacework the women made to support their communities. A few doors down a church's organ moans, as if paying tribute to the women buried below.

As we head east on the 80-mile drive to Westmalle, through sweet tableaux of pastoral Flanders, I recount to Wendy my melancholy meeting days earlier with 92-year-old Marcella Patten, likely the last surviving beguine. The beguinage was her second choice, Patten admitted, after being rejected from every convent she tried due to poor eyesight. Defiant even in her frailty, she still insists on being called "Sister," though beguines were typically known as "Mrs." This is a woman who, like Wendy at Yale, would not accept "No."

BACK AT THE WESTMALLE ABBEY entrance, before Wendy can respond to my proposal to retreat to the inn down the road, the arched doorway swings open. "You can wait here if you like," allows

FLAVORS OF FLANDERS

Het Anker This Mechelen brewery founded by 15th-century beguines now produces the renowned Gouden Carolus beer. Try the brasserie's signature Mechelse *koekoek* (cuckoo), a fleshy local bird.

Restaurant Avalon On the menu at this Gent hot spot: classic vegetarian staples, a well-selected

organic beer list (order the Leireken buckwheat brown), and coffee that comes with a side of rich chocolate pudding.

't Brugs Beertje Belgian students share tables with 70-somethings and North American beer geeks at this rootsy cult pub in the middle of Brugge. Ask owner Daisy Claeys

for the latest favorites, such as the Caractère Rouge, a sour red developed by a Michelin-starred Antwerp chef.

De Halve Maan Brewery Around the corner from Brugge's beguinage, this craft brewery offers tours and pours beer made on-site, served in the café or on the shaded

outdoor terrace. Order the Straffe Hendrik, a strong blond Tripel brewed using a family recipe.

Restaurant Pomperlout In a homey Brugge neighborhood along a park, this newcomer lures diners to a few tables set before a roaring fire, a tiny but thought-out menu, and baskets of fresh brown bread.



Women founded Brugge's Beguinage Ten Wijngaerde in the 13th century; today it's a convent and museum.

the gruff workman. We wrangle our decidedly un-monastic luggage into the sparsely furnished anteroom. Long-legged Wendy lopes off to explore the surrounding farm roads, while I open my laptop to attempt, unsuccessfully, to circumvent the monastery's Wi-Fi security code. Soon after Wendy's return half an hour later, finally we see black-and-white tunics gliding across the churchyard. Brother Benedict, his cassock tied with a rough leather belt, accompanies us to our gracefully modest, high-ceilinged rooms. "The 4 a.m. service is open to retreatants," he explains, "but not to outsiders." What I really want to know is the Wi-Fi password. I bite my tongue instead.

The website's promise of food that is "simple but enough" had sent me into a gastronomic rapture as I imagined abbey-made aged cheese and warm, nutty wholemeal loaves. Here in the dining room, with massive portraits of devout abbots lining the walls, I pick at my plate of supermarket bread and cheese of the single-slice, cello-wrap persuasion. At lunch I gladly reach for a sample of the *patersbier*, a beer served to monks and pilgrims on retreat, which Wendy explains is made with whole flower hops, not pellets. Earthy yeast clings to the glass bottom. I wonder what the monks would think if I scraped the residue with my finger.

Or what reaction I'd get from my dining companions, for that matter. The eclectic group, we learn over whispered conversations, includes a disenchanting eastern European journalist, a Belgian theology scholar, and a Dutch-born Colorado woman whose brother is a monk here: Brother Samuel, a tall spare

man in his late 40s, who has an open smile and friendly handshake and wears a sweatshirt pulled over his robe. I ask what led him to the monk's life. "At 21, I was working in a bakery. I began to wonder: Will this be my life for the next 50 years? There had to be more." An hour later, during the service, his white habit billows as he chants and sings, brimming with a rare sense of joyful surrender.

If we arrived with visions of unraveling the tangle of life, by day two we're starting to fidget. Between services I chase down rumors of an Ethernet plug, and Wendy sets off on the 27-mile "Trappisten Route" through nearby villages on a bike cajoled from Brother Benedict. And instead of filing into the 5:15 p.m. service, we slip out to Café Trappisten at the top of the monastery road. Here at last we find Westmalle's higher alcohol cult beers, a few other recalcitrant retreatants, and salvation in the form of Wi-Fi.

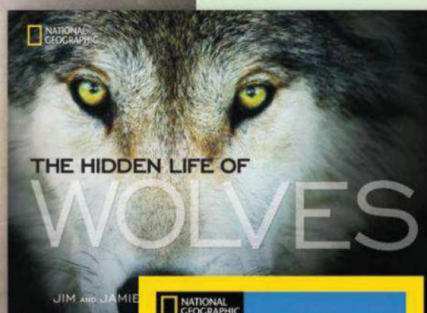
We aren't the best "followers," Wendy and I agree as we gorge hungrily on hunks of silky Westmalle cheese. But playing hooky from church to sip a 9.5-percent Westmalle Tripel, I feel a kinship to Belgium's gutsy beer-brewing beguines. "Do not go where the path may lead," says Wendy, referencing her favorite Ralph Waldo Emerson quote and lifting her glass in a toast. "Go instead where there is no path, and"—Wendy smiles mischievously—"leave an ale."



New York writer JANET FORMAN has been traveling to and writing about Belgium for 15 years. Photographers SISSE BRIMBERG and COTTON COULSON are regular contributors to Traveler.

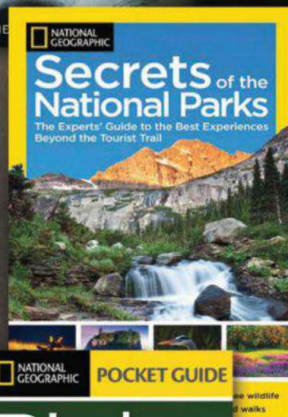
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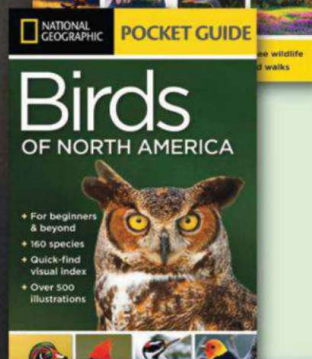
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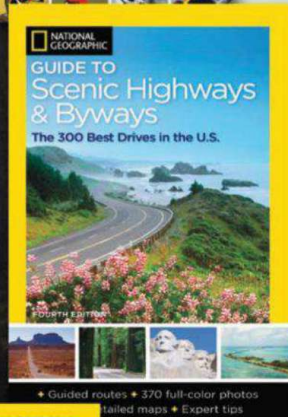
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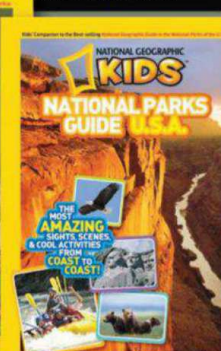
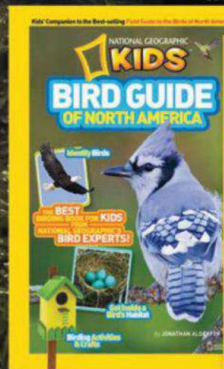
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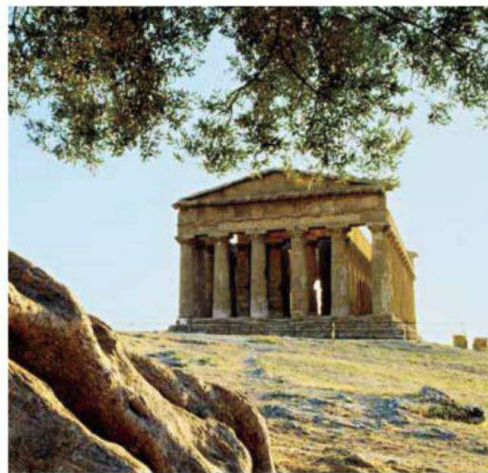
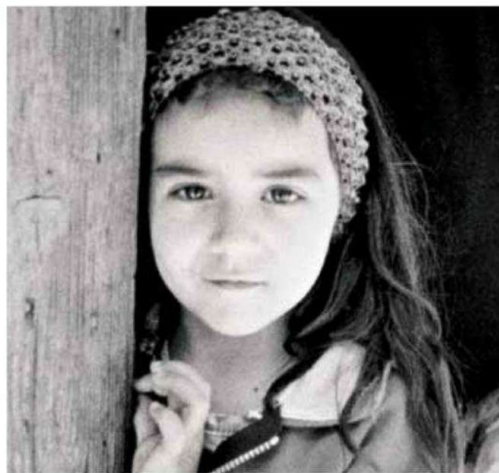
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Going

FIVE WRITERS RETURN TO

Home is much more than your current address. Home means birthplace, family, roots, culture, tradition. It's a deep longing that a growing number of Americans are addressing by tracing their lineages across oceans and continents to



Home

THEIR ANCESTRAL LANDS

their ancestral sources. The urge to glimpse the life of one's forbears by traveling to their homeland is powerful, says genealogist Megan Smolenyak. "Once you get a taste, it's like your own mystery novel; you just can't stop turning the pages." From Krakow to Taipei, here are stories to inspire you to visit your own past.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: RENEE RESTIVO, JUSTIN GUARIGLIA/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STOCK, JOHANNA HUBER/SIME, RENEE RESTIVO, LIZ BEATTY (PEOPLE, DONKEYS), PETER MCCABE/GETTY IMAGES, NINA STROCHULIC



James (left) and Mack Beatty create new memories on the rocks at Giant's Causeway. Opposite: The Beatty family ride ponies across Dunfanaghy tidal flats in northern Ireland.

Beyond the Pale

CHARTING NEW TERRITORY IN NORTHERN IRELAND

by LIZ BEATTY

We find the emerald pastures of great-great-grandfather's farm an hour and half northwest of Dublin, just "beyond the Pale" in medieval Irish terms, near the rural market town of Cootehill in County Cavan, Ulster. Our road trip begins here, bound for the northerly shorelines of this region, composed of Northern Ireland plus three counties of the Irish Republic—a region at times divided by religion, but forever fused by deep roots in ancient Ireland. ¶ With their 85-year-old grandmother, my sons, Mack, 11, and James, 18, pick small cut stones from the ruins of a well, the last vestige of our Beatty homestead. Mom is humming "Irish Eyes," as the three huddle from a steady drizzle under her red drug-store umbrella. Standing at the farm gate, I picture William

Senior setting off from here with his young family, bound for timber reaches in far-off Upper Canada in 1835, ten years before the start of the potato famine. I knew coming here would feel this way, as if we are their emissaries, making the return journey that they knew they never would. If there's such a thing as shared genetic memory, the idea of three generations summoning it together just seemed important. From County Cavan, we head west and then north, soaking in the primal vibe of the Donegal coast. At Slieve League, we brace against 55-mile-an-hour gusts to glimpse some of Europe's highest ocean cliffs, dropping nearly 2,000 feet to an angry sea. We then wind through a wild, deserted mountain bog to the top of Glengesh Pass—breathtaking and bleak. The road hairpins out of sight. I've completely misjudged our travel time to the northern village of Dunfanaghy. This long day isn't over. The skies blacken, and the heavens open. Mother hums "Stormy Weather," and, with 30 miles left, all the road signs turn Gaelic.

At Dunfanaghy, a rising tide fills the wide shallow harbor just outside Arnold's Hotel. Inside, Mack



Opening pages (clockwise from top left): James and Mack Beatty at Slieve League Cliffs, County Donegal, Ireland; St. Mary's Church in Krakow; boys who guided author Joe Mozingo in Angola; Renée Restivo's cousin Margherita in Sicily; bowls of fish tail soup sold at the Taipei night market; Temple of Concordia at the Valley of the Temples, Agrigento, Sicily; Zio Gioacchino with his prized onions on the family farm in Sicily; Mack and James Beatty with their grandmother in Ireland; donkeys in a field in County Donegal; roadside statue of Our Lady of Glengesh Pass in County Donegal; Nina Strohlic's grandparents on their wedding day at the Bergen-Belsen displaced persons camp; glasses of beer at a pub in Dublin; entrance of Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, Taipei; freshly picked olives in Sicily; Slieve League Cliffs, County Donegal; lanterns in the Taipei night market.

presses for another family story before bed. He's our lore guy, for years collecting tads of our history the way a robin gathers bits of twigs. Tonight it's great-grandfather's cousin Sir Edward, the grandson of a Cootehill farm boy who became head of a global transportation empire, the Canadian Pacific Railway. Mack recalls the picture of him in our living room. He is standing beside the Prince of Wales in 1930 on the maiden voyage of the *Empress of Britain*—an ocean liner sunk by a German U-boat in 1940, just miles off Dunfanaghy's shores. We vow to find a good lookout tomorrow to see what we can see.

By morning, everything has changed. The sun shines. The breeze is warm and gentle. We hike to Tramore Beach's vast empty expanse; the boys race down its massive dunes, formed in the great storm of 1839; we ride big-boned Irish ponies across the Dunfanaghy tidal flats. And in one brilliant, no-granny-left-behind mission, James insists that he and his dad half-carry my mom up a steep, craggy path to the highest, most westerly lookout of Horn Head peninsula. As they reach the summit, I see in James's eyes a satisfaction born out of wisdom far beyond his 18 years. His grandmother's joy is palpable, infectious, as together they survey what feels like the northwest corner of the universe—the Atlantic and bloomin' heather as far as the eye can see.

Three hundred miles later—including one golf game with two slices into the North Atlantic—we ponder how best to kill seven hours before flying home. Sleep? Pshaw. Like any self-respecting Irish progeny, we go to the pub.

Mack tosses five euros in an open guitar case to seal the deal. The bandleader introduces Mom. She's surprised but doesn't hesitate, squeezing up to the mic through a cheek-by-jowl throng of Gaelic football fans at Dublin's Oliver St. John Gogarty pub. This Temple Bar hub pulsates with revelers, their beloved "Dubs" having just recaptured the championship after a 16-year drought.

"If you don't know the words, you can't sing the song," yells the banjo player as Mom taps the mic for a sound check.

"Just say the words here," she instructs as she points to her right hearing aid. Eyes roll as the band proffers a few bars of a familiar lead-in. The song: "Danny Boy."

What follows is transcendent. As she leans into her audience, lyrics flowing seamlessly in one ear and out her mouth, her classically trained, freakishly youthful voice sends this Celtic gem soaring. At the end, band members hug her and locals line up to shake her hand. "Imagine what she could do if she knew the feckin words!" shouts the banjo guy over deafening applause.

Later, in that quiet descent to slumber, I replay this moment. Yes, her voice, but more her pluck, her fearless embrace of the moment.

It's a delightful end to a journey that has revealed so much—for sure, illuminating bonds with those long gone, but mostly, reconnecting us to the very best in us here and now.

Canadian writer **LIZ BEATTY** wrote about Ontario's War of 1812 events in the October 2012 issue.

The Sensation of Sisterhood

REUNITING IN TAIPEI'S NIGHT MARKET

by **MEI-LING HOPGOOD**

I pass through the turnstile at the exit of the Jiantan elevated train stop and follow a throng of thousands down the stairs and into Shilin, one of Taiwan's most famous night markets across the Keelung River, near the heart of Taipei. ¶ Above me, Chinese characters scrawled on brightly lit red, white, and yellow signs pierce the Taipei sky. Floodlights swing above women stirring noodles in cast-iron woks and flipping oyster omelets on sizzling grills. I can understand a small set of random, only moderately useful words—"I," "good," "beer," "eat"—in the steady pulse of Mandarin and Taiwanese shouted by vendors and passersby. ¶ It is my first visit to the land where I was born, where most people have hair and eyes like mine, where I'm about as tall (or as short) as everyone else. Still, I am a foreigner, *laowai*. I left Taiwan in 1974, when I was an eight-month-old infant, to be raised by an American family in Detroit, a place that could not be more different from this. Taipei, located about one hundred miles from the southeast





coast of China, is a crowded landscape of skyscrapers, Buddhist temples, and weaving traffic. The market feels like a riotous blend of foreign sensations.

Fortunately, my Chinese sisters guide me. I discover I have six in Taiwan and one in Switzerland. A couple of days after our reunion, four of them lead me through the jungle of people at the night market, buying me shaved ice dripping with fruit and juices, and popping barbecued quail eggs into my mouth.

My sisters are ready to purchase anything for me. They want to show me their native hospitality. They want to make up for 23 years lost.

One of my older sisters holds up a pair of earrings. "You like? Pretty!"

Dolphins. I'm grateful, but it's not exactly my style. And their generosity is humbling, overwhelming. I smile and say, in my suddenly broken English, "Too much. Not necessary."

She ignores me and bargains with the shopkeepers. They bark prices at each other and throw their arms into the air. But then they laugh, a deal is struck, and the merchandise thrust toward me.

We dodge the women selling neon T-shirts illegally from a rack in the middle of the street. Young girls with their hair dyed blond and pink try on sunglasses. Boys nose their mopeds through the fray.

I wander, puzzling over another menu I can't understand. I'm a soggy noodle in the humidity of a Taiwan spring night. The growing mob pushes in, close.

"Xiaojie! Miss!" A woman calls to me and grabs my

sleeve. She wants to sell me something. I shrug the universal sign for "I don't know what you're saying."

My younger sister slips her hand into mine. The feeling of our intertwined fingers sends a jolt through my body.

In Taiwan, women commonly hold hands. As awkward as this intimacy feels to me, the American, I let her lead me away. The combination of this closeness, the dizzying smell of fried dumplings, and the screaming singsong of men selling fabric scissors leaves me breathless.

I'd never wanted to visit Taiwan or my biological family before, but here I am, feeling as if I never want to leave, magically assimilating to a place and people I'd never known. Later, I'll look back and wonder if this intense sense of belonging was a dream, an illusion of desire. But during this first visit to Shilin, I could not feel more at home. I let the night market absorb me. I'm a rainbow sign promising the best bargain, a shrimp in a neon tank, a piece of tofu sweltering in soup. The colorful Chinese characters stacked high above us leave a brilliant stamp in my memory.

My sisters and I meander through the damp streets and alleys, stopping here and there to inspect a pair of platform sandals. We shake our hips to the Mandarin pop blaring from shop speakers. My heart feels so open it bleeds as we hold tightly to one another's hands and slide through the crowd like a snake.

MEI-LING HOPGOOD is the author of *Lucky Girl and How Eskimos Keep Their Babies Warm*.

A vendor sells an assortment of grilled items at the Shilin night market (above). Opposite: The author (middle) with two of her sisters during her first visit to Taiwan in 1997.

A Hunger for Sicilian Cooking

PLANTING ROOTS ON A FAMILY FARM

by RENÉE RESTIVO

I've heard my grandfather's stories about the Restivo family farm near the village of Castrofilippo all my life. "It's right down the block from the Valley of the Temples in Agrigento," he bragged. ¶ Over a decade ago, I made my first trip to that village in southern Sicily to meet my relatives and to see the ancient Greek temples. ¶ Located on the coast, Agrigento's sand-colored Greek temples and ruins stand by knotted trunks of ancient olive trees. Thirteen miles north-east of the temples is Castrofilippo, known as *il paese della cipolla*, "the town of the onion." The small village is surrounded by fruit orchards and groves kissed by the sun, and the countryside is ripe with fig and almond trees. My cousins grow succulent table grapes and are known for the quality and variety of their



sweet white onions and garlies. I arrive representing my father and grandfather and great-grandfather Calogero (who left the island in the late 1800s to save our family farm, but never returned, to his mother's disappointment). Some homes in the historic center were former stables; others are crumbling to the ground, abandoned by those who left Sicily for America. The village has a town square, a church, a cemetery, a statue of St. Pio, a bar, and a couple of pizzerias, but one of my aunts, Zia Carmela, forbids me to eat anything at a town restaurant.

My family's Sicilian dinner feast—in honor of my arrival—

looks like a set for a Fellini film. Dozens of aunts, uncles, cousins—Concetta, Maria, Carmela, Angela, Calogera, Angelo, Diego, Lillo, Lilla, Luca, Giuseppe, Andrea, Gioacchino, and others—shepherd me to the family table, which extends through every room of the house, even the bedroom. My aunts are dressed



identically: black sweater, skirt, tights, and a knotted scarf wrapped around the head.

Zia Carmela is at the wood-burning stove, emptying her copper kettle of pasta into an enormous bowl, which she cradles in her arms. Sicilian-size portions of ziti with *ragù* are piled on each plate—especially mine. *Vino rustico* is poured. Carmela orchestrates the meal and is the last to sit down and eat. In her flowered apron she is authoritative, warm, and gentle.

Between bites of sausage, roasted potatoes flavored with rosemary, salad that tastes of the earth, and homemade bread, I get lost in a blur of conversation and gestures. Zia Lilla tells me how she balanced a terra-cotta jug on her head to carry water from the well to the kitchen in her village each day

RENÉE RESTIVO



when she was a young girl, and that leads to more family stories.

After dinner, my cousin Lillo, a 29-year-old farmer, drives me to the Valley of the Temples to see the Greek ruins by moonlight. In his Alfa Romeo, we whirl along winding roads and speed past the Temple of Concordia, its elegant Doric columns illuminated by a sliver of the moon above the hills. Lillo calls me *amore*. He is irresistible and charming as Sicilian men are known to be. There's a sense that we've known one another for years, despite the fact that we have just met.

The next day Lillo and his father, Zio Gioacchino, pick six varieties of heirloom grapes from the family vines. My favorites are *regina*, which means "queen," and *lacrima*, which means "teardrop." This farm,

thousands of miles away from where I was born in New Jersey, renews my spirit and nourishes my soul. To me, this ancestral land is a blessing.

I leave the farm with onions and garlic, a bottle of Lillo's Nero d'Avola wine, and homemade tomato sauce to bring to my grandfather in New Jersey, so that he can taste flavors of our ancestors. Whenever I am far from the farm and longing for it, I recall the words of a Sicilian man whom I met while traveling. When I told him how I returned to Sicily and began my quest in search of my roots, he smiled and said: "*Ricordati che questa é sempre la tua terra. Remember that this is always your land.*"

RENÉE RESTIVO is a food writer who runs a cooking school in the town of Noto, Sicily.

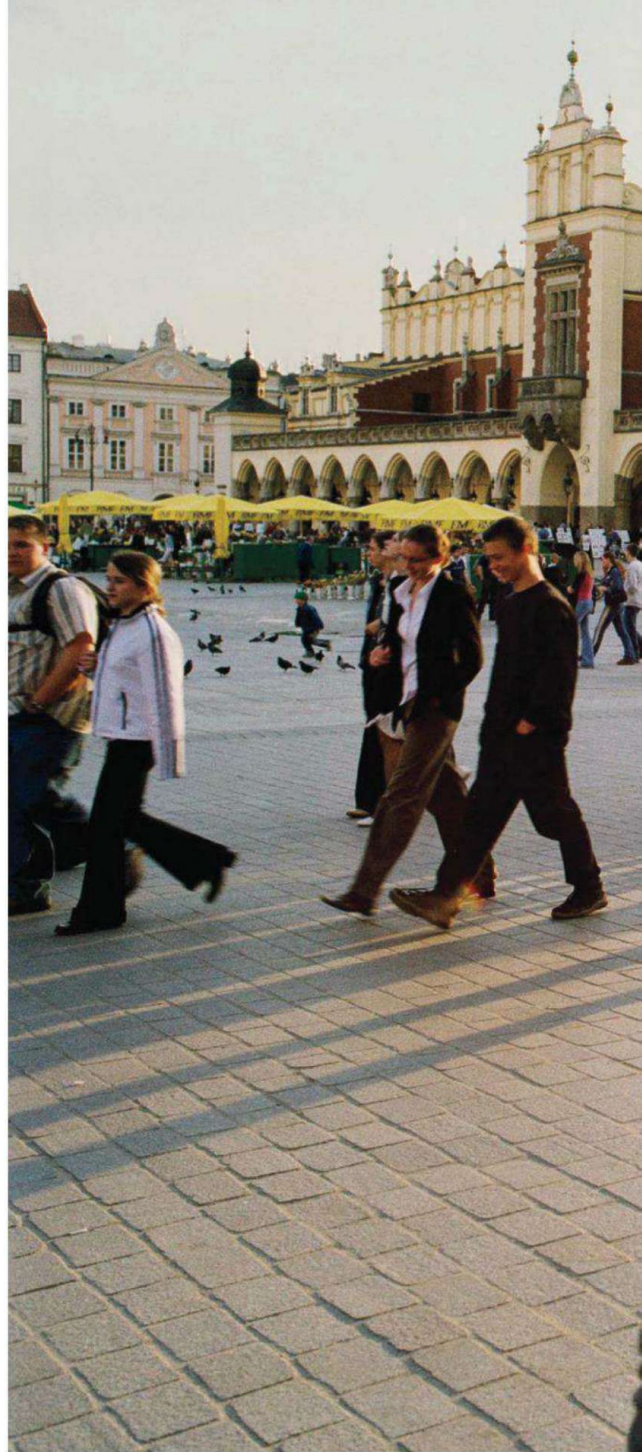
Eight Doric columns remain of the Greek Temple of Heracles (above), a UNESCO World Heritage site in Agrigento. Opposite: Zio Gioacchino grows large sweet onions on the Restivo family farm in Sicily.

Unearthing a Polish Past

IN SEARCH OF A PREWAR LIFE IN KRAKOW

by NINA STROCHLIC

A few times a year throughout my childhood, my mother and I sat around a tan suitcase. She'd pop open the single working hinge and pull out sepia-toned photographs and frayed papers—curfew extensions, identity cards, immigration forms. The suitcase held the remaining tangible links to my grandparents' prewar lives. ¶ In the late 1930s, my grandparents were forced from their homes in Poland into ghettos, and later into labor and concentration camps. On nights the suitcase came out, we'd watch videos of my jovial grandpa remembering the miles of frozen marches and how he won my grandmother's affection by baking her a cake in a displaced persons camp. Soon after, they got married, boarded a ship for Cuba, and sneaked off in New York City. My grandmother died long before I was born, and my grandfather died when I was five, but I know their stories. I know that when my grandmother's parents and brother returned to the rural house where they'd stored valuables, they



were murdered by its postwar inhabitants. "Never forget" wasn't just a phrase for my family; it was a mantra.

My grandfather swore he'd never return to his homeland, but my mom and I needed to go. I thought of it as time travel—Poland was a country of ghosts, a crowd of bearded men walking down cobblestoned streets and hastily evacuated shtetls. A country stuck in the loop of 1938. But the Krakow we encountered, with its soaring castle and café-lined medieval squares, was nothing like that. Virtually unscathed by the Germans, it had the charm of a young, modern city set amidst the mystery of an ancient one. Bursting with Jewish tours, museums, and shops, the city catered to tourists like us—pilgrims unearthing their heritage. Mom and I arrived with a jumble of addresses and began a scavenger hunt in search of my grandparents' past. On a corner in the

NINA STROCHLIC



center of old town we found the storefront site of the seasonally rotating ice cream parlor/fur shop my great-grandparents owned, and across a bridge a music school now occupied the ghetto building they were forced to live in. But our main goal was to see my grandmother's apartment, to touch the childhood home of a woman I never knew.

Rising from the middle of Krakow, a Gothic castle keeps a watchful eye on its city. We found my grandmother's building on a street encircling it, a classic limestone structure. Standing inside the dim hallway, my mother holding a note that explained our quest, we rapped on the wooden door of Number 2. A middle-aged woman cracked it open and greeted us hesitantly. Her eyes flitted over the handwritten note, and confusion melted into warmth. She introduced herself as Marta and ushered us in. The apartment was

beautiful, with ornate inlaid wood floors. "It hasn't been remodeled, except for the bathroom, since my mother bought it in 1949," she said. Mom's expression mirrored my own disbelief. I could almost imagine my great-grandparents stoking the green ceramic-tiled heater that stretched to the ceiling. We talked to Marta for an hour, lingering in the apartment that, save a war, could have been our home.

As my mother and I left, it was hard not to admit our unexpected love for Krakow. The city no longer conjured only fleeing Jews and ghetto walls. Along with them were pierogi festivals and imposing castles. I put mementoes of these in the suitcase where the old and new worlds could finally merge.

NINA STROCHLIC is an avid traveler and a reporter for *Newsweek* and *the Daily Beast*.

Travelers take in the centuries-old Sukiennice ("cloth hall") from a café in Krakow's Market Square (above). Opposite: The author and her mother enjoy Polish fare at a pierogi festival.

The Angola Connection

A SURNAME LEADS TO A JOURNEY IN AFRICA

by JOE MOZINGO

We rolled down a sliver of red dirt road, weeds and sticks crackling under our tires, in search of an old slave port that long ago vanished in mangrove jungle. This out-of-the-way track made me nervous because it was ex-

actly where the travel advisories warned visitors not to go in Angola, a country riddled with land mines after three decades of civil war. ¶ My guide and translator, a British expat named Paul, asked the two young boys showing us the way if they knew of any mines. I heard them say hesitantly, “No.” ¶ “They say there aren’t any,” Paul confirmed. ¶ This was not convincing. ¶ We bumped along farther until the track fell away entirely into a gully, and we set down the path on foot. The sun was getting low, washing the tops of the palm trees in ocher light. A man harnessed high in the fronds tapping sap for palm wine looked at us curiously as we passed beneath.



The boys who guided the author during his ancestral quest in Angola.

We were just outside the town of Soyo, hiking to an estuary of the Congo River, about five miles from its mouth on the Atlantic. I had envisioned finding old stone docks and iron slave pens, perhaps strangled in roots like some ancient Khmer ruin. Even if I found that, I did not know what it would mean; there was no checklist to mark off, no tangible objective or end point. I was on a quest that was more than anything an act of imagination—if not insanity, given the cost and time it took me to get here. I was looking for the man who gave me the surname Mozingo, an ancestor who landed in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1644. He was a “Negro” man who married a white Englishwoman during a brief period in colonial America when that could happen. More than 300 years later, his white descendants, including me, had long lost track of that history and were wondering where they got this funny name. Many insisted, sometimes vociferously, they were Italian or French or from anywhere but Africa, but the truth was here in Angola, this troubled country on the western coast of central Africa, which once sent torrents of slaves to America.

Variants of the name are common here even today, and the revered first Christian king of Kongo was named Mozinga. In the year Edward Mozinga likely journeyed across the Middle Passage, 4,336 slaves were documented as being taken from Angola, out of 6,529 from all of Africa. They went to Brazil and the Caribbean, and a tiny fraction ended up in Virginia.

I knew I couldn’t find records of my ancestor here as I could with my other forebears in Europe. I would not see the school he went to or the church he attended, or pore through baptismal records, or meet long-lost cousins with oral histories. But I needed to have a sense of where he came from, beyond the wild phantasms most of us in the West harbor about sub-Saharan Africa. I needed to cross a breach in my mind that made it difficult to really fathom my family’s story, for Edward to be real.

We descended into the mangrove forest, where the path ended at a clear stream. Paul said he’d wait there. The boys and I trudged down the stream as it got deeper and joined more streams in a silty tidal swamp.

The boys laughed as they attempted to spear a crab with a stick near an old dugout canoe decaying in the mangrove roots. The forest seemed to be closing in, not leading us to a port where slave ships could have launched. We crossed a sulfurous mudflat that slurped at our feet and had the boys in hysterics. I thought about how children like these, their parents

JOE MOZINGO

Saluting Innovators in Sustainable Tourism

3rd ANNUAL

THE LEADER IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AWARD PRESENTED BY



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To honor excellence in travel marketing, *National Geographic Traveler* and the Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International have once again teamed up to recognize and honor companies for their leadership in creating and communicating an authentic sense of place through wisely managed tourism campaigns. Winners were judged on their efforts to preserve the environmental, cultural, and historic integrity of a destination, and on how the marketing program demonstrated innovation and accomplished its goals.

This year's **Leader in Sustainable Tourism Awards** were presented at HSMAI's annual Adrian Awards in New York City, held at the Marriott Marquis on January 28, 2013.



Left to right: Kimberly Connaghan, Publisher, National Geographic Traveler; Robert Kheel, Board of Directors, Grupo Puntacana; Jake Kheel, Environmental Director, Puntacana Resort and Club; Fran Brasseux, Executive VP, HSMAI

PLATINUM WINNER

PUNTACANA Resort & Club Dominican Republic

This world-class resort has put meaningful and measurable sustainable practices in place that not only affect the resort, but the entire island—from establishing waste management, recycling, and medical care programs to protecting fresh water sources and marine life. Staying true to its original vision to establish a resort community that protects the country's rich culture and natural habitat, PUNTACANA is a model for sustainability around the globe.

GOLD WINNERS

Park City Mountain Resort, Park City, Utah

Environmental responsibility is paramount to this trail-blazing destination, which has reduced its carbon footprint by 60 percent by using renewable energy sources and installing energy-efficient snow-making and grooming equipment. Their wind turbines and solar panels are on display to educate visitors, and with parent company POWDR Corporation, they have commissioned a groundbreaking "Save our Snow" initiative to measure global warming's effect on the resort and Utah's snow sports industry.

Song Saa Private Island, Cambodia

Working with the local community has helped Song Saa become a model for coastal development that protects the natural environment. The resort's environmental management system weaves sustainability into all aspects of their operation and guest experience and provides community support for marine restoration and sustainable livelihoods programs.



somewhere waiting for them to return home, must have marched through here in shackles, never to see their families again.

"Onde porto?" I asked.

They all pointed down. "Here."

The port can't be here, I thought; no ship could get here. I started down the channel, the water rising above my knees.

The boys just stood there on the mudflat, studying the crazy white man.

"Porto aqui?" I yelled back again.

"Sim, sim, sim, aqui—Yes, yes, yes, here," they said.

Maybe they were right. Maybe long ago, silt filled in the port. The sun was setting in the northwest, and the mosquitoes were swirling around me. I knew I had to stop. When you journey into the past, you always want to go further, and you'll never get to your destination, and you'll never be sated, just as you'll never fully understand your roots as they split into infinity. But you learn something in the glimpses.

JOE MOZINGO is a reporter for the Los Angeles Times and author of *The Fiddler on Pantico Run*.



A duo dances by the beach on Ilha de Luanda in Angola.

GENEALOGY 101

The Route to Your Roots

Fueled in part by TV shows such as NBC's hit *Who Do You Think You Are?* in which celebrities like Blair Underwood and Marisa Tomei discover their ancestral heritage, interest in roots travel has taken off in the past decade. In an Ancestry.com poll last year, four out of five Americans said they were interested in learning about their family histories, which can often be accomplished in a series of mouse clicks, thanks to the extensive collection of digitized records on the Web at places like ancestry.com and familysearch.org. But now more resources are becoming available to help families on the ground in the old country, whether it's locating grave-stones, retracing immigration journeys, or meeting long-lost relatives.

Collect data: The trend taps into a collective yearning for connection in our transient culture, says genealogist Megan Smolenyak,

whose latest book, *Hey, America, Your Roots Are Showing*, delves into her experiences tracing the ancestry of the Obamas and other prominent Americans. "Families have dispersed so much, [genealogy] gives us a way to feel we belong." Before you jump online, Smolenyak suggests gathering names of ancestors and dates (births, deaths, marriages)—as many as possible. Look through old memorabilia, such as military discharge papers, Bibles, and yearbooks, and chat up older relatives. "If you have a few



Arrival at Ellis Island.

specifics in hand, you may avoid barking up the wrong tree."

Search the Web: Use genealogical websites to help you fill in the blanks. At ancestry.com, a \$35 monthly subscription buys access to a trove of ten billion records. Other sites, such as lowcountryafricana.com, which explores African-American genealogy in the Southeast, are geared toward specific diasporas. The granddaddy of ancestral record collections, however, is Family Search in Salt Lake City, run by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, with the names of three million deceased people. The records are still being digitized, but armed with key dates, you can order microfilm to be shipped to one of the library's 4,500 branches.

Make connections: Tourism offices can also be a resource. Discover Ireland (discoverireland.com), for instance,

has a section on its website devoted to helping Americans trace their heritage, as well as a toll-free number that helps connect callers with ancestral towns. A government initiative this year is capitalizing on the roots travel trend by inviting anyone in the Irish diaspora to the Gathering 2013, a series of events in the country throughout the year.

Go the extra mile: Once you're on the ground, dig further or search for original documents at local archives or churches, depending on the country. In Ireland, some hotels even have genealogy butlers. Or just page through the local phone book to look for residents with family names. "Call them up and start comparing names of ancestors," suggests Michelle Ercanbrack, Ancestry.com's family historian. "There's something incredible that happens when you go to these places. It's an absolute adventure." —Margaret Loftus



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A particularly restful way to take in the majestic mountain scenery, is on a spectacular ride on the Rhaetian Railway – whether on the Glacier Express or on the famous Albula-Bernina line, now part of UNESCO World Heritage. Among the region's other highlights are the inspiring, world-class cultural and sporting events and diverse cuisine offered at a variety of top-quality restaurants.

This picturesque area will not disappoint those in search of pure mountain experience coupled with some of the best hotels in the world, GaultMillau restaurants and world-class shops in St. Moritz.

For more information please visit
www.engadin.stmoritz.ch

What mountains. What lakes. What light!



Swiss Tracks

FIVE GREAT TRAIN ESCAPES FOR ALL SEASONS



With the Matterhorn in the distance, a sledder glides through the Alpine village of Findeln, Switzerland.

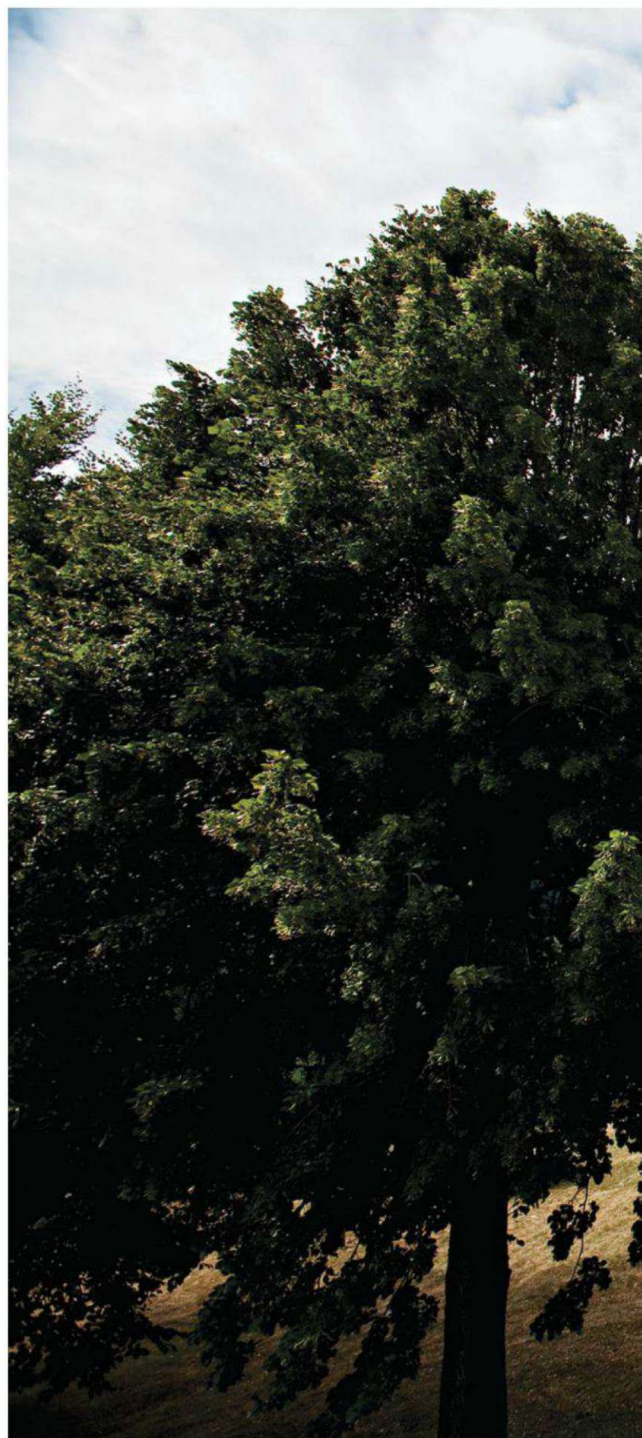
BY EVERETT POTTER

Call it Europe's track star. Though small—this Alpine nation is about the size of Massachusetts and Connecticut combined—Switzerland offers some of the world's most spectacular scenery, from glacial lakes to misty peaks. And nearly every adventure is connected by train.

A classic route like the Golden Pass from Lucerne to Montreux can be done in a single day packed with sights and heights, including views of the highest Alps. But why rush? Part of the romance of rail travel is the sense of timelessness it affords.

The Wilhelm Tell Express, a panoramic boat-and-train tour that crosses Lake Lucerne and rolls into Italian-influenced Lugano, connects areas ideal for summertime hikes. The Glacier Express from Zermatt to St. Moritz chugs across the heart of the Alps through 91 tunnels and over 291 bridges. From urban trams in artful Zürich to cogwheel trains up mountains and a few bus rides along the way, you can cover an entire nation by rail, boat, and bus, with a romantic (and hypnotic) click-clack as your sound track.

In Switzerland, curiosity rides on rails. Here are five thematic train journeys across a multilingual, multicultural country. All aboard!



THE WIDE ANGLE

*Lucerne–Meiringen–Interlaken–Gstaad–
Château d'Oex–Montreux*

Every tour of Switzerland is a photographer's dream. But the 130-mile train route from Lucerne to Montreux, known as the Golden Pass, provides killer shots. With end points at Lake Lucerne and Lake Geneva, the itinerary offers mountains, Alpine meadows dotted with chalets, and towns rooted in the Middle Ages. It also links French- and German-speaking Swiss cultures.

My photographic journey always begins in lakeside

INTERNATIONAL MAPPING: GIOVANNI
SIMEONE/SIME (PRECEDING PAGE)



Lucerne, where flotillas of swans paddle alongside vintage boats. Thanks to an Old Town that's a car-free maze of Renaissance buildings and the Kapellbrücke, a wooden bridge that dates in part to 1333, there's plenty to photograph. For mountain images, devote an afternoon to cruising by steamer from Lucerne to Weggis and ascending Mount Rigi by railway or cable car. Or take a boat to Alpnachstad for Mount Pilatus, the latter reached by the steepest cogwheel railway in the world, with a 48 percent gradient.

Leaving Lucerne, the Golden Pass train climbs 3,284 feet to cross the Brünig Pass. Since I'm a Sherlock Holmes fan, I get off in Meiringen and take

a funicular to the top of Reichenbach Falls, where the fictional detective met his death. (He was resuscitated by Arthur Conan Doyle after public outcry.)

Interlaken ("between the lakes") is indeed bookended by Lakes Thun and Brienz. It's the gateway to the Jungfrau region, a cluster of Alpine villages at the base of the legendary Mönch, Eiger, and Jungfrau peaks. Board a local train for the 20-minute ride to Lauterbrunnen, take a short bus ride to Stechelberg, and then step onto a gondola to ascend to the tranquil village of Mürren. Plan to take the Jungfrauabahn from nearby Grindelwald the next day, climbing through a nearly four-and-a-half-mile tunnel to the

A Protestant church rises over Château d'Oex, a town in the canton of Vaud that's famous for its annual International Hot-Air Balloon Festival.

Best of the Alps

Switzerland is good for the soul, says Andrew Evans, *Traveler's Digital Nomad*, who spent a month exploring the Alps. "I left happily exhausted, my limbs sore from climbing, my tummy content, and my spirit elevated," he says. Here are five travel tips. Read more Digital Nomad dispatches at digitalnomad.nationalgeographic.com.

1. Switzerland offers more opportunities to eat **superior chocolate** than anywhere else in the world. One of my favorite shops is Max Chocolatier in Lucerne.



2. In summer, don't miss the **Geissenkehr, in Zermatt**: Each morning and evening for six weeks, local goatherds lead their long-horned blackneck "glacier goats" through the Bahnhofstrasse.

3. **Swiss cheese** is a national treasure. Once you've tried the big cheeses (Gruyère, Appenzeller, Emmentaler), sample a few of my favorites: l'Etivaz, Sbrinz, Bündner Bergkäse, Tilsiter, and Heutaler.

4. Swiss spas represent a centuries-old holistic healing tradition, so **take the waters**. Options abound, from posh spas like the Kronenhof to low-cost public spas fed by natural springs, like the Bellavita in Pontresina.

5. Keep time. The **Swiss railway clock**, designed in 1944, is a national icon, present at every train station and copied by Apple. Buy an official watch and head home on schedule.



Jungfrauoch, the roof of the Alps (bring a jacket—you'll need it at this elevation) and the highest railway station in Europe at more than 11,000 feet.

From Interlaken, the Golden Pass reaches 4,180 feet between Saanenmöser and Schönried before stopping at the winter resort town of Gstaad, which has been attracting the über-rich for Olympic-class socializing for more than a century. The Gstaad Palace rises like Cinderella's castle over the village; both town and hotel are stuffy and deliriously expensive. I like to watch the scene from Charly's, a village patisserie. Just try not to act like a paparazzo.

South of Gstaad lies French-speaking Switzerland. Look for balloons overhead as you approach Château d'Oex. Better yet, plan a visit during the International Hot-Air Balloon Festival (January 26 to February 3). Balloons lift off year-round here; the best bet for a photogenic ride is Ballon Château d'Oex. Bring your wide-angle lens.

Back on the train, prepare to plunge into the 1.4-mile-long Jaman Tunnel, emerging with a glimpse of Lake Geneva. The ride may end in lake-side Montreux, but the photos don't have to. This is the Swiss Riviera, with palm trees along the shore, the French Alps across the lake, and French culture everywhere. In July, catch the Montreux Jazz Festival. For a fun photo, shoot the statue of singer Freddie Mercury, who is honored annually in Montreux.

THE PATH TO GREATNESS

*Lucerne-Lugano-Tirano-
Davos-Pontresina-St. Moritz*

Walking and hiking are national pastimes (bordering on obsessions) in Switzerland, with more than 37,000 miles of trails. Many of the best walking routes—think snow-frosted mountain ridges and quiet hamlets—begin steps from the train station.

From Lucerne travel across the lake by steamboat to Rütli on the Flüelen line to walk all or part of the 22-mile Swiss Path, inaugurated in 1991, marking the 700th anniversary of the 13th-century Swiss Confederation (the precursor to modern Switzerland). Start walking in Rütli Meadow, stroll around Lake Urn, and end in Brunnen. Along the way, check out Beroldingen castle and the Tell Chapel, honoring 14th-century Swiss hero William Tell.

Walking is so integrated into daily Swiss life that even snow-covered walking trails are scrupulously maintained throughout the Alps. Signposting is better than the road system in other countries; yellow signs point the way along lower elevation hiking routes and indicate distances to nearby villages. "Walking in Switzerland is about absorbing the natural beauty with all your senses," says Paolo Santioli, who guides walkers in Switzerland for the Wayfarers.

HP: HUBER/SME (HIKING), SEBASTIAN DOERK/MAX CHOCOLATIER (CHOCOLATE), KRISTIA ROSSOW/NGS (WATCH), LUCA DA ROS/SME (BUILDING, OPPOSITE PAGE)



“Walking in Switzerland is about absorbing the natural beauty with all your senses.”

“The cable car system links up well with many trails and provides a convenient way for walkers to cover more ground and conserve energy.”

While in Lucerne, book a trip on the Wilhelm Tell Express, a package that starts with a steamboat cruise down Lake Lucerne to Flüelen and continues with a first-class train to the Italian-influenced canton of Ticino, where palms define the waterfront resort of Lugano. I’ve tested my mettle here on a six-hour high-altitude hike, but a more accessible route begins with a cable railway ride up to Mount Lema with its views of both Lake Maggiore and Lake Lugano and then a walk along a ridge to Mount Tamaro.

My favorite summertime adventure kicks off with a calm morning at a lakeside café in Lugano followed by a scenic three-hour bus ride to Tirano, Italy, for lunch. The next day, take the spectacular Bernina Express to Davos, best known for skiing and the World Economic Forum. The following morning, take a walk from the Davos Frauenkirch station along a path lined with abstract sculptures leading up to the mountain hamlet of Stafelalp. The expressionist painter Ernst Ludwig Kirchner lived here and became enamored with the dense forest, jagged peaks, and changing light of the landscape. After this three-hour adventure, head to the Kirchner Museum in Davos to

see your hike depicted in the collection of Kirchner’s paintings, including “Rising Moon on the Stafelalp.”

The next stop is Pontresina. A two-hour round-trip hike from the station goes along the Val Roseg, a dramatic valley in the Engadine region. Another highlight is lunch at Hotel Roseg Gletscher. Sit on the deck, dig into regional specialties like *capuns* and *pizzocheri* (buckwheat noodles with potatoes, vegetables, and cheese), and view the Bernina range glaciers.

The Bernina Express continues on to St. Moritz, which has one of the sunniest climates in the country and 360 miles of hiking trails. My favorite excursions from the St. Moritz area include a challenging hike up Piz Nair, a crossing of Corvatsch (take a bus to Surlej to catch a cable car), and a guided glacier tour of Diavolezza (backtrack past Pontresina to access the cable car) for a walk that’s more downhill than up.

THE ART-SMART SET

Basel–Bern–Zürich

Switzerland has a strong relationship with the visual arts. Gallery-hopping begins along the Rhine in Basel, where more than a dash of modern flash sparkles near the city’s well-preserved medieval heart. The city’s Kunstmuseum is filled with works by 14th- to 16th-century Upper Rhine artists and 20th-century cubists and German expressionists. Look for paintings by Hans Holbein

A hiker crosses Corvatsch along the Fuorela Surlej pass (left). The edifice of Basel’s Zentrum Paul Klee (below) symbolizes Swiss landscapes.



St. Moritz (below) shines bright in wintertime. Getting there aboard the Glacier Express (opposite, crossing the Landwasser Viaduct) is half the fun.

the Younger, Konrad Witz, and Arnold Böcklin, all of whom lived and painted in Basel.

Since 1970, June's Art Basel has morphed into one of the world's glitziest art fairs, a monied mélange of galleries, dealers, and museum curators. But Basel is also a site for architecture buffs; in the St. Johann neighborhood, 14 "starchitect" buildings populate the campus of the Novartis corporation, including buildings by Yoshio Taniguchi and Frank Gehry.

Basel's Fondation Beyeler museum has works by van Gogh, Miró, Picasso, Kandinsky, Matisse, and Rothko. And the Museum Tinguely houses kinetic, art-making machines by Jean Tinguely, a Swiss sculptor known for large and playful mechanical pieces.

Next, hop a train to Bern and head to the Zentrum Paul Klee to embrace the world's largest collection of work by one of Switzerland's best artists, housed in a rippling Renzo Piano-designed building. Visit the Kunstmuseum Berne to see the creations of other Swiss artists such as Ferdinand Hodler and Meret Oppenheim, and then dine alongside the Aare River at the Schwellenmätteli, where lamb tagine with plums, cardamom, mint, and almonds is delicious.

The next stop is Zürich, a city of bankers—and collectors immersed in a young art scene. The Kunsthaus Zürich is heavy with Swiss masters like Henry Fuseli, but there are other delights, like Robert Delaunay's vibrant "Formes Circulaires: Panneau Mural" and a comprehensive collection of work by Alberto Giacometti. Take a train one stop to Zürich

Hardbrücke to experience the postindustrial zeitgeist of Zürich West, where artists and architects have repurposed moribund manufacturing buildings. Löwenbräu Areal is the center of Zürich's art scene, a converted brewery that houses the Kunsthalle Zürich, the Migros Museum of Contemporary Art, and a handful of contemporary galleries.

Zürich West has an edgy Berlin-like energy. "Some of the best galleries in Zürich are here," says Bobbie Leigh, a New York-based art critic who suggests visiting Galerie Bob van Orsouw, Peter Kilchmann Art Gallery, and Hauser & Wirth. After art-hopping, kick back at Sphères, a bar/café/bookstore along the Limmat River, or Restaurant Viadukt, a café overlooking Josefwiese, a small city park.

THE SNOWSCAPE

Zermatt–Andermatt–St. Moritz

Think of the Swiss rail system as the ultimate ski lift: It's the smart way to stitch together several resorts in one trip. Begin in Zermatt, the holy grail of European winter sports, where slate-roofed barns sit next to five-star palace hotels. The village is dominated by the Matterhorn, the most iconic and mesmerizing Alp of all. You can only get there by train—the town has always been car-free—and depending on your wallet, you'll arrive at your hotel by horse-drawn carriage or electric cart.



Golden Ticket

Don't take a pass on this amazing offer: The **Swiss Pass** (www.swiss-pass.ch) is good for multiple days (or one month) of unlimited rail, bus, tram, and boat travel. A bonus: It secures entry to some 470 museums. An eight-day pass is \$689 in first class, \$430 in second class. The Flexi Pass option offers multiple days of consecutive or nonconsecutive travel within one month. Plan your trip and pick the pass that's right for you.



IRIS KUERSCHNER/GETTY IMAGES

*“One of the Old World’s most delicious,
under-the-radar gastronomic destinations
is the littoral of Lake Geneva.”*





The 12th-century vineyard terraces of Lavaux, which run along Lake Geneva, are a UNESCO World Heritage site.



MATT DAVENPORT (BUILDING), EDUARD MELTZER (FOOD), MATTHEW THOMAS (VINEYARD, PRECEDING PAGES)

Embrace the day by taking a series of aerial trams up to 12,500 feet on the Klein Matterhorn and skiing across the Italian border to the resort of Cernivia. After a pasta lunch and a taste of Italian *la dolce vita*, return to Zermatt in time for après-ski frolics. There are raucous bars like Papperla Pub and little *boîtes* such as Elsie's, where people in fur coats sip champagne and eat snails after a day on the *pistes* (ski runs). Then kick back at the futuristic Vernissage, a chic hotel, bar, and gallery.

"Think cuckoo clocks and Toblerone," says Lizzie Norton, a Londoner and former ski tour operator who now spends her winters in Zermatt. "The village has such a traditional and romantic feel. Though it might not be Europe's largest ski area, it offers about 80 mountain restaurants to choose from and the always delicious attraction of lunch in nearby Italy."

Board the famous Glacier Express in the morning. The "express" is a misnomer, as the train takes nearly eight hours to make the 180-mile trip to St. Moritz. But since there's no hurry, get off in Andermatt (which means "on the meadow"), a folksy and understated resort where the average Swiss—not the international crowd—enjoy a simple winter holiday. It's short on glamor but long on local customs. Book a room at the River House and, if there's fresh snow, follow the savvy locals to the north-facing bowl on Gemsstock Mountain for powder that rivals Colorado's.

Back on the train, brace for a thrilling ride through the Oberalp Pass, with a high point at 6,670 feet. Disentis is the next stop; you can see the country's oldest Benedictine monastery (founded in 720, rebuilt in the 17th century) from the window. This is the heart of the Vorderrhein Valley in the canton of Grisons, where the majority of Romansh speakers reside. Then it's through Vorderrhein Gorge, which has been enthusiastically (and somewhat dubiously) dubbed Switzerland's Grand Canyon.

St. Moritz, the classic glamor-puss of Swiss skiing, is indeed grand—if not outlandish. Can you name another resort where polo matches and horse races take place on a snow-packed frozen lake? Winter sports were all but invented here by the British in 1865. In some ways, the town seems to value flash more than its neighbors, but though the jet set seems to regard the mountains as mere fashion backdrops, you should head straight to the *pistes*. Intermediate skiers can try the Corviglia area, while experts should go for the Corvatsch section and its lengthy run from Piz Corvatsch to Margun Vegl. If you're there at just the right time, the snow might appear red, stained by sand blown up from the Sahara.

THE MOVABLE FEAST

Zürich–Bern–Lausanne–Lugano

To those who think that the subject of Swiss cuisine can be summed up in one word—fondue—I say not so fast. In a country with four official languages (French, German, Italian, and Romansh) culinary traditions reflect a complex national identity.

Put your fondue prejudice aside in Zürich by cruising the food hall of the tony Globus department store. There's perch from nearby lakes, organic produce, dozens of sausages, *bündnerfleisch* (dried beef), and more varieties of cheese than you can possibly

imagine. My favorite spot for breakfast is within the belle époque splendor of Café Felix, where an omelet with *schinken* (ham) and Swiss cheese is a pricey delicacy. Wander into Schober for the city's best hot chocolate. Lunch is as simple as a local *weisswurst* from a vendor along Lake Zürich.

The city's newest food site is Markthalle at Im Viadukt, a food hall beneath a railroad viaduct in Zürich West. The oldest is the elegant Kronenhalle, where the menu is nearly as seductive as the original works by Matisse and Picasso on the walls. I prefer the more egalitarian Hiltl, a vibrant spot that opened in 1898 and claims to be Europe's oldest vegetarian restaurant; go for the creative curries.

From Zürich, take a train to Bern, the capital whose gastronomic claim to fame is classic *Emmentaler rösti*: cheese melted atop potatoes. Sounds simple enough, but at Restaurant Brasserie Anker Bern, there are more than 20 varieties of rösti, incorporating staples such as ham and eggs and outliers such as bananas and anchovies.

The next stop is French-speaking Lausanne, on the hillside overlooking Lake Geneva; its cafés offer the Gallic cuisine of the canton of Vaud. If you have pockets as deep as Lake Geneva, try the Anne-Sophie Pic at the Beau-Rivage Palace, the essence of modern culinary art. Or duck into the casual Café du Grütli in the old city for some of the best fondue in the country, made with Gruyère and Vacherin Fribourgeois cheeses and perfectly paired with a local white wine such as St. Saphorin, a prestigious appellation.

Check into Lausanne's Beau-Rivage Palace (opposite, top) and feast at Anne-Sophie Pic, a restaurant celebrated for cuisine with French flair. A little gem, Zürich's Schober (opposite, bottom) is a café and dessert shop.

In a country with four official languages, culinary traditions reflect a complex national identity.

"Switzerland has preserved one of the best larders in Europe," says Alexander Lobrano, a Paris-based food writer for the *New York Times*. "One of the Old World's most delicious under-the-radar gastronomic destinations is the littoral of Lake Geneva, where you can eat everything from addictively good Malakoffs—cheese beignets—in simple, friendly taverns to some of the world's finest haute cuisine."

For an Italian-influenced culinary tour take a two-and-a-half-hour rail ride from Zürich to Lugano. With each click south into the Ticino canton, Switzerland picks up a palpable Mediterranean feel. Italy is just a few miles away from lakeside Lugano, a fact evident in the sweets—panettone and orange-flavored amaretti—at the venerable Grand Café Al Porto pastry shop, which dates from 1803. Pop into Läderach for chocolates, and slurp a scoop of *nocciola* (hazelnut) gelato at La Gelateria.

Europe's most exuberantly scenic country is tied together by more than just train tracks. Food, art, a passion for the outdoors, and a pleasure in the details aren't mere ideas here. They're Swiss bliss.

Swiss rail aficionado EVERETT POTTER publishes a blog for travelers in search of value (www.everettpotter.com).



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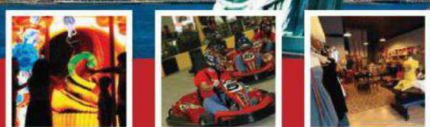
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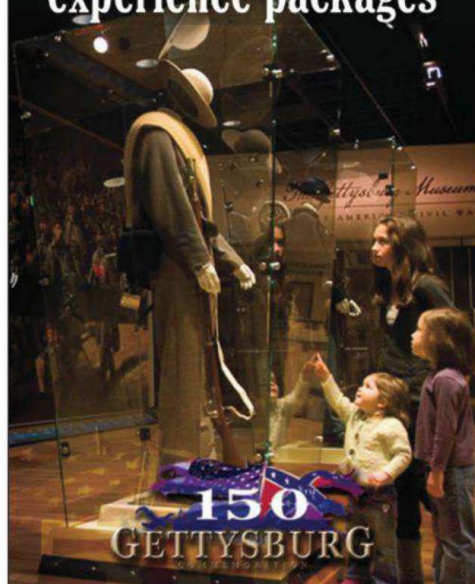
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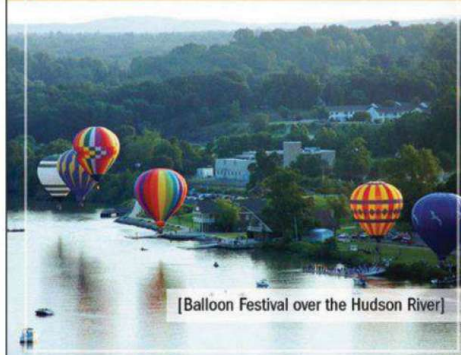
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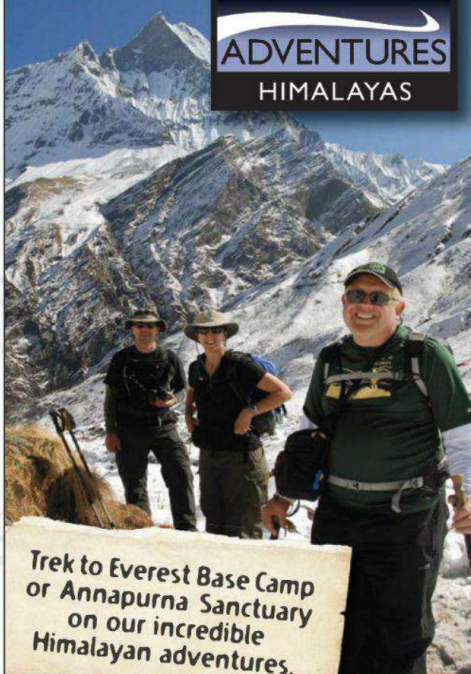
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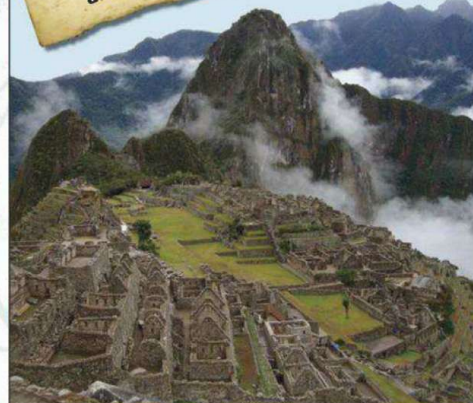
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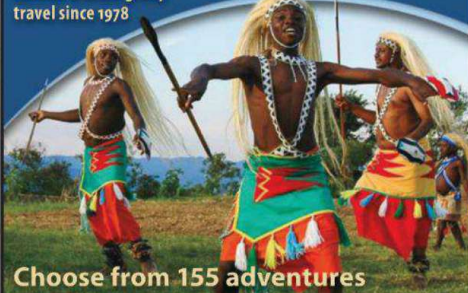
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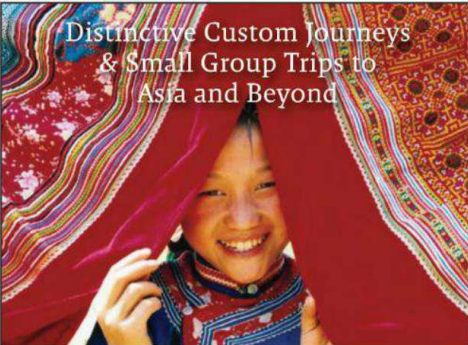
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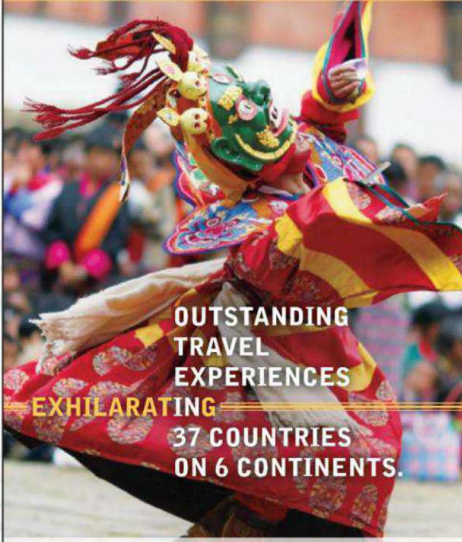
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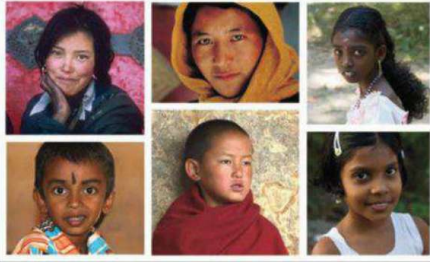


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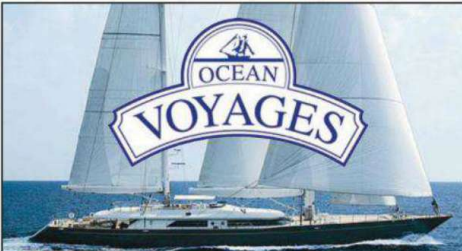
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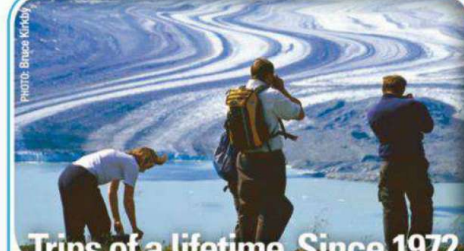
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Red Square

MOSCOW'S RED SQUARE (Krasnaya Ploshchad) is known for its political symbolism but was actually named for its loveliness: *Krasnaya*, or "red," meant "beautiful" in old Russian. The plaza has drawn crowds since it was a 1400s shantytown. Russians know the square as the front yard of rulers from Ivan the Terrible to Vladimir Putin. Westerners are apt to recall the Cold War's lock-stepping armies. Along with Moscow's great architectural jewels, including the crenellated Kremlin walls and St. Basil's onion domes, Red Square remains the beating heart of Russia. —ANDREW NELSON

GEOMETRICS Red Square is actually a rectangle sprawling 800,000 square feet.

ACCIDENTAL TOURIST In 1987, Mathias Rust penetrated Soviet airspace in an attempt to land his Cessna on the square using only a street map to navigate. He landed on a nearby bridge to avoid hitting tourists gathered at the landmark.

INTENTIONAL TERRORIST In December 2003 a suicide bomber (and widow of a Chechen rebel) blew herself up at the entrance to the square, killing five other people.

ARCHITECTURAL REDO Two of the square's masterpieces are just 20 years old. The Kazan Cathedral, blown up by Joseph Stalin in 1936, was rebuilt from old blueprints after the collapse of the Soviet state. The Resurrection Gates, removed in 1931 so tanks could enter, were restored in 1994.

R.I.P. The body of Vladimir Lenin, the Soviet Union's first dictator who died in 1924, has been on display since 1930 in the granite tomb that flanks the square. His mummy is swabbed weekly with bleach to fight discoloring and mold.

I SPY Perched atop the Kremlin walls, the brick Tsar's Tower may look like the top of a fairytale castle, but it has ominous origins. Five centuries ago, Ivan the Terrible spied on his subjects from the tower (formerly a wooden turret).

RED TAG SALE The square's Victorian Gosudarstvenny Universalny Magazin mall (GUM) opened in 1893 with more than 1,000 shops. Today it's an outlet for luxury goods.

BACK IN THE U.S.S.R. Many Soviet leaders are buried in a Kremlin cemetery. Lesser mortals who

share that resting place include John Reed (1887-1920), an American journalist who documented the Soviet Union's birth and died there, and 238 Bolshevik soldiers buried in a mass grave.

STATUE OF LIMITATIONS Despite being the country's symbolic center, the square has only one statue. It depicts Kuzma Minin and Prince Dmitry Pozharsky, two patriots who defeated invading Poles in 1612.

 **In Our iPad Edition:** View a 360-degree panorama of Moscow's Red Square.

QUIZZABLE

Which Western rock band has not performed in Red Square?

- a) Rolling Stones
- b) Linkin Park
- c) Red Hot Chili Peppers

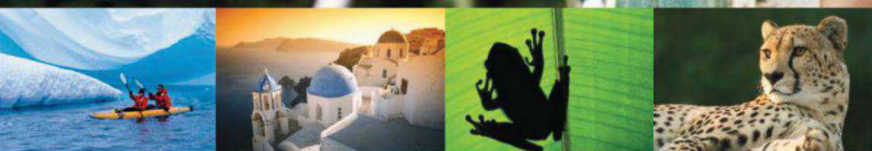
The group asked to play in the Soviet Union in 1967, but was rebuffed.

Answer: A.



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Above: A young explorer takes in a tree-top view on a canopy walk in Costa Rica.

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*T*hough I often looked for one, I finally had to admit that there could be no cure for Paris. Part of it was the war. The world had ended once already and could again at any moment. The war had come and changed us by happening when everyone said it couldn't. No one knew how many had died, but when you heard the numbers—nine million or fourteen million—you thought, *Impossible*. Paris was full of ghosts and the walking wounded. Many came back to Rouen or Oak Park, Illinois, shot through and carrying little pieces of what they'd seen behind their

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